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Uncle Terry

A Story of the Maine Coast

Charles Clark Munn

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UNCLE TERRY

A STORY OF THE MAINE COAST

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THE HOME OF UNCLE TERRY

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UNCLE TERRY

A Story of the Maine Coast

BY

CHARLES CLARK MUNN

Author of "Pocket Island"

ILLUSTRATED BY HELENA HIGGINBOTHAM

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UNCLE TERRY

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BOSTON, U.S.A.

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To

THOSE WHO LOVE TO WANDER OVER GREEN MEADOWS,
ALONG MIRTHFUL BROOKS,
OR BENEATH FOREST TREES WHERE THE BIRDS
DWELL, OR FIND CONTENT ON LONELY
SHORES AND MUSIC IN THE
OCEAN'S VOICE,

This book is respectfully dedicated

BY THE AUTHOR

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UNCLE TERRY

A STORY OF THE MAINE COAST

CHAPTER I

A WAIF OF THE SEA

"It's goin' to be a nasty night," said Uncle Terry, coming in from the shed and dumping an armful of wood in the box behind the kitchen stove, "an' the combers is just a-humpin' over White Hoss Ledge, an' the spray's flyin' half way up the lighthouse."

"The Lord-a-massy help any poor soul that goes ashore to-night," responded a portly, white-haired woman beside the stove, as a monster wave made the little dwelling tremble.

Uncle Terry took off his dripping sou'wester and coat, and, hanging them over the wood box, went to the sink and began pumping a basin of water.

"Better have some warm, Silas," said the woman, taking the steaming kettle from the stove and following him; "it's more comfortin'."

When he had washed, and combed his scanty gray

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locks and beard at a small mirror, he stood for a moment beside the stove. His weather-beaten face that evinced character, so pronounced were its features, wore a smile, and his deep-set gray eyes emitted a twinkle.

"Supper 'most ready, Lissy?" he asked, eyeing a pot on the stove that gave out an appetizing odor. "I'm hungry 'nough to eat a mule with the harness on!"

"'Twill be in a minit," was the reply. "Better go into t'other room where Telly's settin' the table."

Uncle Terry obeyed, and, finding a bright fire burning there, stood back to it, smiling affectionately at a young girl busy beside the table. She had an oval face, a rather thin and delicate nose, small sweet mouth, and eyes that were big, blue, and appealing. A wealth of light hair was coiled on the back of her head, and her form was full and rounded.

"It's blowing hard to-night, father, isn't it?" she observed. "I can feel the waves shake the house." Then, not waiting for an answer, she stepped to a closet, and bringing a short gray coat and felt slippers, pushed an armchair to the fire, and placing the slippers beside it, held the coat ready for him to put it on.

"You might as well be comfortable," she added: "you haven't got to go out again, have you?"

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The man seated himself, and drawing off his wet boots and putting on his slippers, opened his hands toward the blaze and observed: "You and Lissy's bound to cosset me, so bimeby I won't stir out 'cept the sun shines."

Silas Terry, or Uncle Terry, as everybody on Southport Island called him, was, and for thirty years had been, the keeper of "The Cape" light, situated on the outermost point of the island. To this he added the daily duty of mail carrier to the head of the island, eight miles distant, and there connecting with a small steamer plying between the Maine coast islands and a shore port. He also, in common with other of the islanders, tilled a little land and kept a few traps set for lobsters. He was an honest, kind-hearted, and fairly well-read man, whose odd sayings and quaint phrases were proverbial. With his wife, whom everybody called Aunt Lissy, and adopted daughter Telly, he lived in a neat white house close to the Cape light and, as he put it, "his latch-string was allus out."

Uncle Terry had a history, and not the least interesting episode in it was the entrance into his life of this same fair and blue-eyed girl. Perhaps his own graphic description will best tell the tale:

"It was 'bout the last o' March, more than eighteen

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year ago, and durin' one o' the worst blows I ever rec'clect since I kep' the light, that one mornin' I spied a vessel hard an' fast on White Hoss Ledge, 'bout half a mile off the pint. It had been snowin' some an' froze on the windows o' the light, so mebbe she didn't see it 'fore she fetched up all standin'. The seas was poundin' her like great guns, an' in her riggin' I could see the poor devils half hid in snow an' ice. Thar wa'n't no hope for 'em, for no dory could 'a' lived a moment in that awful gale, and thar wa'n't no lifeboat here. Lissy an' me made haste to build a fire on the pint, to show the poor critturs we had feelin' for 'em, an' then we just stood an' waited an' watched for 'em to go down. It might 'a' been an hour, there's no tellin', when I saw a big bundle tossin' light, an' comin' ashore. I ran over to the cove where I keep my boats, and grabbed a piece o' rope an' boat hook, and made ready. The Lord must 'a' steered that bundle, for it kept workin' along, headin' for a bit o' beach just by the pint. I had a rope round my waist, an' Lissy held onto the end, an' when the bundle struck I made fast with the boat hook and the next comber tumbled me end over, bundle an' all, up onto the sand. I grabbed at it, an' 'fore the next one come, had it high an' dry out o' the way.

"It's allus been a puzzle to me just why I did it, for

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I was wet through an' most froze, an' what I'd pulled out looked like a feather bed tied round with a cord, but I out with my knife an' cut the cords, an' thar in the middle o' two feather beds was a box, an' in the box a baby alive an' squallin'!

"I didn't stop to take the rope off my waist, but grabbed the box an' ran for the house with Lissy after me. We had a fire in the stove, an' Lissy warmed a blanket and wrapped the poor thing up an' held it over the stove an' kissed it and took on just as wimmin will. When I see it was safe I cut for the pint, thinkin' to wave my hat an' show 'em we had saved the baby, but a squall o' snow had struck in an' when it let up the vessel was gone. Thar was bits o' wreck cum ashore, pieces o' spars, a boat all stove in, an' the like, an' a wooden shoe. In the box the baby was in was two little blankets, an', tied in a bit o' cloth, two rings an' a locket with two picters in it, an' a paper was pinned to the baby's clothes with furrin writin' on it. It said the baby's name was Etelka Peterson, an' 'To God I commend my child,' an' signed, 'A despairin' mother.' From bits o' the wreck we learned the vessel was from Stockholm, an' named 'Peterson.'

"The paper was sech a heart-techin' appeal, an' as we'd just buried our only child, a six-year-old gal, we was glad to adopt this 'un an' bring her up. In

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due course o' time I made a report o' the wreck to the Lighthouse Board, an' that we had saved one life, a gal baby, an' give all the facts. Nothin' ever came on't, though, an' we was glad thar didn't. We kep' the little gal, an' she wa'n't long in growin' into our feelin's, an' the older she growed, the more we thought o' her."

Of course the history of Uncle Terry's protegée was known to every resident of the island, and as she grew into girlhood and attended school at the Cape — as the little village a quarter mile back of the point was called — until she matured into a young lady, every one came to feel that, in a way, she belonged to the kindly lighthouse keeper and his wife Melissa.

To them she was all that a devoted daughter could be, and when school days were over she became Uncle Terry's almost constant companion. On pleasant days she went with him to attend his traps, and on his daily drive to the head of the island. She was welcome in every house and well beloved by all those simple, kindly people, who felt an unusual interest in her existence. Of tender heart and timid nature, her appealing eyes won the love of young and old. On Sunday evenings she was always one of the small congregation that gathered to hold simple services

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UNCLE TERRY AND TELLY

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in the little church at the Cape — a square one-story building that never knew paint or shutters.

Of beaux she hardly knew the meaning, and it must be said the few young men who remained on the island after reaching the age of courtship were neither in garb nor manners such as would attract a girl like Telly.

One special talent she was gifted with and that the ability to draw and paint well. Even as a child at school she would draw pictures on a slate that were surprising, and when older, and she obtained materials, she worked until she became, in a way, quite an artist. As Uncle Terry put it, "Makin' picters comes nat'rl to the gal."

She had never received even the first lessons in that charming art, but for all that every room in the house had dozens of her efforts, large and small, hanging on the walls, and in the oddest frames. Some were of strips of thin board covered with little shells or dried moss, and others of rustic handiwork and mounted with fir cones.

There was but one shadow in her life and that the fact that no one of the relatives she imagined she must have in far-off Sweden ever made any effort to learn the fate of her parents, who she knew had gone down so near her home. The story of her rescue with

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all its pitiful details was familiar to her and in her room were treasured all the odd bits of wreckage: the locket that contained her parents' pictures; the two rings; the last message of her mother; and even the wooden shoe that had floated ashore. How many times she had looked at those two pictured faces, one a reflection of her own, how many tears she had shed in secret over them, and how, year after year, she wondered if ever in her life some relative would be known to her, no one, not even her foster-parents, ever knew. Neither did they know how many times she had tried to imagine the moment when her despairing mother, with death near, and with prayers and tears, had cast her adrift, hoping that the one little life most dear to that mother might be saved. The fatal reef where those parents had gone down also held for her a weird fascination, and at times the voice of the ocean seemed like the despairing cries of mortals. One picture, and it was her best, was a view of the wreck, as near as Uncle Terry could describe it, with human forms clinging to the ice-clad rigging and tempestuous seas leaping over them. The subject held an uncanny influence over her, and she had spent months on the picture. But this shadow of her life she kept carefully guarded from all.

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CHAPTER II

UNCLE TERRY

"I WA'N'T consulted 'bout comin' into this world," said Uncle Terry once, "an' I don't 'spect to be 'bout goin' out. I was born on a wayback farm in Connecticut, where the rocks was so thick we used ter round the sheep up once a week an' sharpen thar noses on the grin'stun, so't they could get 'em 'tween the stuns. I walked a mile to school winters, an' stubbed my toes on the farm summers, till I was fourteen, an' then the old man 'greed to give me my time till I was twenty-one if I 'ud pay him half I earned. I had a colt an' old busted wagon, an' I took to dickerin'. I bought eggs an' honey an' pelts of all sorts, an' peddled notions an' farmin' tools. When I cum of age I went to the city an' turned trader an' made a little money; got married an' cum down into Maine an' bought a gold mine. I've got it yit! That is, I've got the hole whar I s'posed the mine was. Most o' my money went into it an' stayed thar. Then I got a chance to tend light and ketch lobsters, an' hev stuck to it ever

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since. I take some comfort livin' and try an' pass it along. The widder Leach calls me a scoffer, but she allus comes to me when she's needin', an' don't allus have to cum, either. My life's been like most everybody else's — a streak o' lean an' a streak o' fat, with lean predominatin'. 'Twas a streak o' fat when I found a good woman an' she said 'yes,' an' a streak o' lean when I was bamboozled by a lawyer into buyin' a gold mine. I've kep' that hole ever since an' paid taxes on't, to prove to myself jest how big a fool a man can be an' live.

"I've never wronged nobody, nor done much prayin', an' when the Almighty calls me I think I'll stand jest as good a chance o' gittin' a harp as those who's done more on't. The worst skinnin' I ever got was done by this ere lawyer who never sot down to meals 'thout askin' a blessin', an' mebbe that's the reason I'm a scoffer. I've observed a good deal since I left the old farm, an' have come to the belief that thar's a sucker born every minit and two ter ketch him. When I was young I took hold o' the big end o' the log an' did the liftin'; but now I take hold o' the little end an' do the gruntin'! Thar's one thing I've larned, and larned it for sartin, an' that is, thar's dum few people in this world that cut a ham in the middle. Most on 'em cut few slices an' cut 'em thin."

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Among the Southport islanders Uncle Terry was considered an odd stick, and yet one who would go out of his way to do a good turn to others. He was seldom seen at church, though his wife and Telly usually were. As he once remarked: "It's a good thing for 'em, 'cause it takes up thar mind an' is more sociable, tho' prayin' allus seems to me a good deal like a man tryin' to lift himself by his boot-straps. It keeps him busy, tho', an' it's healthy exercise."

In spite of his investment in a mine, he had been frugal and owned most of the land between the village and the point, and was also joint owner, with two other men, in a small trading-schooner that made semi-monthly trips between the Cape and Boston. She carried fish, clams, lobsters, hay, and potatoes, and fetched an "all sorts" cargo useful to the islanders, from a paper of needles to a hogshead of molasses.

The most pronounced characteristic of Uncle Terry was his unfailing good humor, tinged with a mild sarcasm. He loved his fellow-men, and yet enjoyed puncturing their small conceits, but so droll was his way of doing it that no one felt the sting. To Bascom, who kept the only store, and also post-office, at the Cape, and dearly loved to hear himself talk, Uncle Terry once said: "You've got the greatest gift o' gab I ever heerd, Bascom, and you could 'a' made your

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fortin in the show business. But if you're ever took with religion, the hull island'll turn infiddle."

And again: when Deacon Oaks, the leader at all prayer-meetings, assured him how great a blessing religion was, and how much he enjoyed divine service, Uncle Terry answered: "Your takin' the lead at meetin's is a blessin' to the rest, for none of 'em has to worry 'bout who's goin' to speak next. They know you're allus ready."

In this connection it must be stated that the spiritual life of Southport was of a primitive description. The small unpainted church at the Cape, above which hung a diminutive bell, was the only place of worship, and to this, every other Sunday, came a minister from the mainland. It was furnished with long wooden settees and a small cottage organ graced the platform, upon which an antique desk did duty as pulpit and a storage place for hymn books. Four wall bracket lamps lighted this room for evening service, and their usually smoky chimneys lent a depressing effect to all exhortation. "Mandy" Oaks presided at the organ and turned gospel hymns into wheezy and rather long-drawn-out melodies. Most of the audience tried to chase the tunes along and imagined they were singing, which, perhaps, is all that is necessary. On the Sundays between the

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minister's visits only evening services were held, and every Thursday evening a prayer-meeting. It was on these latter occasions that Deacon Oaks was in conspicuous evidence. The Widow Leach, a poor unfortunate woman who had seen better days, and in whose poverty stricken life religion was the only consolation, was also prominent; and her testimony, unvarying in tenor as the tunes played by Mandy, helped to fill out the service.

"It's lucky the widow's sure o' lots o' happiness in the next world," observed Uncle Terry once, "for she ain't gittin' much in this.

"I can't hear Oaks, though, 'thout thinkin' o' Deacon Rogers up in Wolcott, who never mentioned the need o' rain till he'd got his hay in. He was a sly fox, and allus thanked the Lord for sendin' rain nights an' Sundays, so the poor hired men could rest.

"I used to have him held up as a shinin' example, but he opened my eyes arter I began dickerin' by sellin' me a lot o' eggs that had been sot on two weeks, an' the storeman I sold 'em to never trusted me agin. 'Twas a case o' the ungodly sufferin' for the sins o' the righteous that time, which may be a pervarsion o' Scriptur, but the truth, just the same.

"But I got a little comfort finally, for when the

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Deacon died, by some inadvartance the choir sang, 'Praise God from whom all blessin's flow,' an' I wa'n't the only one who felt that way, either."

In spite of Uncle Terry's mildly flavored shafts of sarcasm, he made no enemies and his kind heart and sterling honesty were respected far and near. He was considered a doubter and skeptic, and though seldom seen at church, as he had originally contributed his share when that edifice was built, his lack of piety was forgiven.

There is a sense of justice underlying all men's minds, and the natural instinct is to judge others by what they are and how they live, rather than by what they profess, and so it was in Uncle Terry's case. He lived truthfully, obeyed his conscience, observed the Golden Rule, wronged no one, and as with many others who do likewise, he had a right to feel that in the final balance his book of life would show a wide margin on the credit side.

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CHAPTER III

TWO ORPHANS

A STRANGER visiting Sandgate on a summer afternoon would inevitably conclude the town was asleep. Often not a person would be visible the entire length of its main street, cooled by three rows of maples, one dividing it, and one shading each of the two sidewalks formed of narrow strips of weather-stained marble. Under some of these trees that almost touch branches for half a mile one or two cows might be grazing or taking a siesta while chewing the cud of content. On the vine-hid porch of the village tavern landlord Pell would quite likely be dozing in an arm-chair tilted back, and across the way Mr. Hobbs, who keeps the one general store, would as likely be napping on a counter, his head pillowed upon a pile of calico. A little further up the street and near the one tall-spired white church Mrs. Mears, the village gossip, may be sitting on the veranda of a small house almost hid by luxuriantly growing Norway spruce, and idly rocking while she chats with the widow Sloper, who lives

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there, and whose mission in life is to cut and fit the best "go to meetin'" gowns of female Sandgate. Both dearly love to talk over all that's going on, and whether this or that village swain is paying especial attention to any one rosy cheeked lass, and if so "what's likely to come on't." Both mean well by this neighborly interest, and especially does Mrs. Sloper, who always advises plaits for stout women, "with middlin' fulness in the bust" for thin ones.

One or two men may be at work haying in the broad meadows west of the village, through which the slow current of a small river twists and turns, or others wielding hoes on a hillside field of corn to the east, but so far as moving life in the village street goes there will be none. On either side of the Sandgate valley two spurs of the Green Mountain Range, forest-clad, stand guard as if to isolate from all the world this peaceful dale, whose dwellers' sole ambition in life may be summed up in — to plow, plant, reap, and go to meeting.

On the north end of this park-like highway, and beyond the last house, it narrows to an ordinary roadway and divides. One fork turns to the right, following up the banks of a winding stream to an old grist-mill with moss-covered wheel and lily-dotted pond above. The other turns to the left, crosses the narrow Sand-

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gate valley, and bears south past the Page place. If it were Sunday, not many years ago, and about eleven in the morning, a stranger passing the church would have heard through the open doors and windows the exquisitely sweet voice of Alice Page, clear as a bell and melodious as a bird's, toying and trilling through "Coronation," or some other easily recognized hymn; and had that stranger awaited the close of service he or she would have seen among the congregation filing out one petite and plump little lady, with flower-like face, sparkling blue eyes, and kiss-inspiring mouth, who would most likely have walked demurely along with her big brother Albert, and turning down a narrow pathway, follow him across the meadows, over a foot-bridge that spans the stream, and up to an old-fashioned elm-shaded house.

This landmark, known far and wide as the Page place, is historic. Built in the time of King George, and one of the first three erected in Sandgate, it has withstood the storms of two centuries and seen many generations of Pages come and go. Additions have been made to it — an ell on one side, larger windows and a wide veranda in front. Inside it is much the same, for the open fireplaces remain in parlor and sitting-room and a tall clock of solemn tick stands in

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the hall where it stood when Paul Revere took his famous ride.

The last owner, Simeon Page, — or, as he was called, Squire Page, — joined the great majority two years after an enterprising railroad crept up the Sandgate valley. He had bitterly opposed its entrance into the town and it was asserted that chagrin at his defeat hastened his death. His widow, with their two children, Albert and Alice, and a widowed sister, remained and with the aid of hired men managed the farm. But bushes began to choke the pastures and meadows; the outbuildings grew shabby; the house received no paint; and as the children grew up and needs increased, one by one the broad fields were sold. It had been the squire's ambition that his only son should become a professional man, and carrying out his wishes, Albert's mother had pinched and saved, denying herself all luxuries, and given him a collegiate education. He had graduated with honors; read law; been admitted to the bar; and then returned to Sandgate and opened an office. Alice, three years his junior, had been sent to a boarding-school for two years, where she devoted most of her time to music, then came home again as mother's helpmate.

But the years of self-denial were at an end, for one June day that mother laid down her burden and was

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placed beside her husband in the village cemetery. Then the two orphans found themselves joint heirs to to an old time-worn house, a few acres of meadow, a couple hundred dollars of debts, and — nothing else. No; that is not right, for they both had youth, good health and habits, and good educations.

Albert, who had rather taken charge of matters since his return to Sandgate, kept the debt situation from Alice after his mother's death, feeling she had grief enough to bear without it, but for all that, it troubled him seriously. The income from his practice was scarcely enough to clothe him and not likely to increase, for Sandgate had scant use for a lawyer; and what to do, or which way to turn, he knew not. If it were not for Alice and Aunt Susan he thought it would be easier, but they must be provided for. Alice, who had been his companion, playmate, and confidant since the days of short dresses, he especially cared for, and that feeling was mutual.

So devoted a brother and sister were they that it had kept them from forming other associations, and when Albert had been asked why he did not escort some other young lady to the husking-bees, barn dances, or church sociables, his usual reply was: "Alice is good enough for me, and when she prefers another beau I may, but not till then."

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With Alice, though many of the village swains wooed, — she wouldn't. Even Jim Mears, stalwart, and with a hand like a foot, fared no better, and when Albert rallied her once about young Mears she answered: "Oh, Jim's all right. He isn't handsome, but then, he is strong," which delicate sarcasm may be considered a sufficient reflex of her feelings toward others of the would-be attentive young farmers.

But for all that, Alice was counted in on every festive gathering. If it was a barn dance she was always there and never lacked partners, and when the jolly party rode home in a big wagon filled with straw it was her voice that always started "The Quilting Party," or other old-time ballad usually inspired by moonlight. When a strawberry festival was in order at the church she was given a post of honor, and when Christmas decorations were necessary every young man felt it a privilege to obey her orders. At home she was the same winsome little queen, and had no more devoted subject than her brother.

For a month after the funeral he worried a good deal. He knew that bills had been left unpaid through his mother's illness, and that the family were in straitened circumstances. His own law practice so far had yielded scant returns, and what to do and where to turn was a puzzle. He wrote to a former

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classmate whose father was a prominent merchant in Boston, stating his situation and asking advice. It was two weeks ere he received a reply, and then, though a cordial letter of sympathy, it did not go far toward solving the problem. A week later, however, came a letter from a lawyer in that city by the name of Frye, offering him a position as assistant in his office at a small salary. It was so small that Albert thought it a hopeless task to pay home expenses out of it and leave anything towards their debts. It was more than his present income, however, and yet to accept the offer and leave Aunt Susan and Alice alone seemed hard. On the other hand, to borrow money on what little of the farm was left did not help matters, for when that was gone, what then?

Matters came to a climax one day, and ended his indecision. He had been away from his office all that afternoon, taking a long stroll in the woods to escape his loneliness, and returning at tea time, found a cloud on his sister's face.

"Mr. Hobbs called this afternoon," she said as they sat down to the table, "and asked for you. Said he went to your office, and not finding you in, came here." And then she added with a quiver in her voice, "Oh, Bertie, we owe him over one hundred dollars!"

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The trouble was all out now, and Albert looked gloomy. "I don't think any more of him for coming here to dun us," he answered savagely; "he might have waited until he saw me."

"Oh, he was very nice about it," responded Alice, "and begged my pardon for speaking of it. He said there was no hurry, only that he had made out his bill as a matter of form, etc., and we could pay it when convenient."

Albert made no further comment, but when the meal was ended, said: "Come out on the porch, sis, and let us talk matters over." She followed him, feeling there was trouble coming, and drawing her low chair next to his, placed one elbow on his chair arm and covered her face with that hand. For a few moments he remained silent, watching the fireflies beginning their evening dance over the meadow and listening to the distant call of a whippoorwill. Across the valley the village lights were coming in sight, one by one, and a faint odor of new-mown hay came to him. The pathetic little figure at his side unnerved him, however, and he dreaded to say what he must.

"Well, sis," he said at last, "I've kept matters from you as long as I can. We not only owe Hobbs a good deal, but as much more in smaller bills to

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others, and there is no money to pay them. I've worried about them more than you know, or than I cared to have you. One of two things must be done, either borrow money and pay these bills or I must go away and earn some."

Then the little head beside him sunk slowly to his chair, and as he began stroking it he added, "I've written to Frank Nason, my old college chum, and through him have received a fair offer to go to Boston, and have decided to accept it. I shall leave here as soon as I can get ready."

The trouble was growing serious now, and as he ceased speaking he caught the sound of a suppressed sob. "Don't cry, Alice," he said tenderly, "it can't be helped. Our home must be broken up sometime and it may as well be now as any other. The thing that worries me most is leaving you and Aunt Susan here alone."

Then the sobs increased and the bowed form beside him shook.

"Oh, Bertie," she said at last in a choked voice, "don't leave us here alone. Let us sell the old house, pay the bills, and if you must go away, let us go too."

"No, dear, that is not best," he answered softly. "I can't earn enough at first to do it. You will have to stay here till I can."

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Then the proud spirit that had come to Alice Page from many generations of self-helpful ancestors spoke and she said as she raised her head and brushed away the tears: "If you are to leave me here I shall go to work as well. I can teach school, or do something to help you, and I shall, too!"

Her defiant little speech hurt Albert just a bit and yet he felt proud of her for it. "It may be best for you if you could get a chance to teach," he responded, "and it will help me some, and take up your mind, which is worth a good deal."

But the worst was to come, and the evening before his departure she never forgot. There were some consolations to exchange, however, for she had seen Mr. Mears of the school committee and obtained a position to teach the north district school in Sandgate, — a small by-road schoolhouse, two miles from her home, — and felt a little pride in telling about it; while he had to report that all whom they owed had promised to wait patiently for their dues.

"Mr. Hobbs even offered to lend me money if I needed it," he said after they had talked matters over, "and so, you see, we have a good many friends in Sandgate after all. And now I want you to sing a few of the old songs for me, so that I can have them to think about when I am lonesome and homesick."

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But the singing was a failure, for Alice broke down in the middle of the first song and they had to go out and watch the fireflies once more, while she conquered her tears.

"You will write to me every day, won't you, Bertie?" she asked disconsolately, as they waited the next morning for the train that was to separate them. "I shall be so lonesome and blue all the time!"

When he kissed her good-by she could not speak, and the last he saw, as the train bore him away, was that sweet sister's face, trying bravely to smile through its tears, like the sun peeping out of a cloud.

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CHAPTER IV

A SPIDER IN HIS DEN

"Thar's a sucker born every minit, an' two ter ketch him."—*Uncle Terry.*

THERE are lawyers and lawyers. Not all are legalized pickpockets, and not all are imbued with the sole and noble purpose of serving the ends of justice, whether that service lines their pockets or not. Some, and I may say many of them, contrive to reverse matters and to make justice serve them, and if the ways of justice do not conspire to that end, so much the worse for the blind goddess. Modern justice oft-times means the longest purse and the keenest ability to evade the law, and while an unprincipled lawyer will not exactly throttle the mythological maiden who holds the scales, he will, if necessary, so befog her every sense with evasions, subterfuges, and non-pertinent issues that she might just as well have been born deaf and dumb, and without feeling, as well as blind, for all the use she has of those senses. Not only does modern law service frequently resolve itself

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into a contest of unscrupulous cunning, but modern law-making is occasionally shaped to serve the ends of the profession, instead of justice. While the majority of lawyers are not rascals in name, a good many are at heart, and with the most, when it comes to the question of justice and a small fee and injustice and a big one, — well, draw your own conclusions, all ye who have been fools enough to seek recourse at law.

Lawyers seem to thrive on the passions and vanities of mankind, and many of them are looking for fools who have money and a grievance. The time-worn sarcasm that "After man came woman, and she has been after him ever since" would be more to the point if "lawyer" were substituted for "woman."

But the world is full of fools who thirst for revenge in law, or seem anxious to find some one to dupe them in other ways and always succeed; so Uncle Terry was more than half right when he said, "Thar's a sucker born every minit, an' two ter ketch him."

Of all the smooth, elusive vultures lurking in the shadow of the temple of justice, or perching upon it, Nicholas Frye, or "Old Nick," as many called him, was the most cunning. Nor did his looks belie the comparison, for he had deep-set, shifty, yellow-gray eyes, a hooked nose, and his thin locks, dyed jet black, formed a ring about his bald poll. He walked with

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a stoop, as if scanning the ground for evidence or clues, and to add to his marked individuality, when he talked he rubbed his hands together as though washing them with invisible soap. It was not from any sense of cleanliness that he did this, for they had many times been soiled willingly in the most nefarious transactions. A client was to him a victim to be kept in waiting; exasperated in regard to his grievances by all possible means; deluded as to his chances of success in quest of justice; deceived as to its cost; and robbed in every way known to an astute lawyer. He had been the legal adviser of John Nason for many years, and when that busy merchant came to him on behalf of his son, who wanted to find a position for Albert Page, Frye readily promised to give him employment. It was not because he needed him, but because he saw at once that through some friendship for this young sprig of the law, as he intuitively considered Albert to be, he could strengthen his hold upon the father and obtain some secrets that might eventually be used to rob him. In plain words, he thought to use this young country lawyer as a spy. He knew that John Nason felt a keen interest in his only son Frank, and that was another reason for employing that son's friend. He knew also that Frank was given a liberal allowance, spent it rapidly, and most

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likely would be getting into various scrapes needing a lawyer's efforts to rescue him, and so he would have further pickings in that direction. These were two good reasons for his ostensible acts of kindness, and so he at once sent for Page to come.

When, the morning after his arrival in Boston, Albert presented himself at Frye's office, he found that lawyer busy reading his mail.

"Take a seat, sir," said Frye politely, after Albert had introduced himself, "and excuse me until I go through my letters." And then, for a long half hour, Albert was left to study the bare office walls and peculiar looks of his future employer. Finally Frye turned to him and asked rather abruptly: "Well, Mr. Page, what do you know about law?" at the same time scanning him as if expecting to see hayseed adhering to his garments.

"Not much, perhaps," replied Albert modestly, uncertain of his ground. "I have been in practice only a year at Sandgate, and the few people there do not have much use for a lawyer."

"Then why didn't you stir 'em up a little and bring 'em to see they needed your services?" was Frye's next query. "You will never succeed as a lawyer unless you make business. Did you bring your sheepskin with you?"

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"No, sir," answered Page, "I didn't think it necessary, after what I wrote you. I have it in my trunk."

"Well, bring it to-morrow," said Frye. "I make it a rule to take nothing for granted and have everything in writing;" and then he added with a searching look, as if he was about to utter a crusher, "What is your idea of a lawyer's chief object in existence?"

Page was a little nonplussed. "Oh, I suppose," he replied slowly, "to see that laws are properly executed and justice done."

Frye looked at him a full minute without making any further comment, while a sardonic grin gradually drew his lips apart, showing a full set of false teeth, and then, as he began rubbing his hands together, he said:

"It's evident, young man, you have much to learn in your profession. Laws are made for lawyers, and are the tools of our trade. If the world does not see fit to use those tools, it is our business to make them, and as for justice, that is an allegory, useful in addressing a jury, but considered a fable by the judge. Laws are useful to oppose other laws with, and various decisions are only good in so far as they help your case and hinder your opponent's.

"You seem an honest-appearing young man, which

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is well so far as our relations go, but no further. I want an assistant, and one who is ready and willing to do just as I direct and to ask no questions. Do you think you can fill the bill?"

"I can try," replied Albert quietly, "and as soon as I get used to your methods of procedure here I think I can succeed."

He was a little startled at the peculiar character of his employer, and in a way slightly disgusted, but he was not in a position to cavil or feel squeamish over apparent lack of honesty, and resolved at once to ignore it.

"What do you wish me to do?" he continued after a moment. "I will do the best I can for you and am ready to go to work now."

"You are to be at the office at eight o'clock sharp," replied Frye, "take one hour for lunch, and remain till six." Then he added by way of a spur to his slave's fidelity, "I am paying you seventy-five dollars a month on the recommend of an important client of mine who wanted to humor his son. It was your good luck to have this son's friendship, as he belongs to a wealthy family. He is a spendthrift, of course, but that is no matter, and all the better for us. Take my advice, and cultivate him all you can. It may be the means of bringing us more business. What I say

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to you I shall expect you to consider a professional secret and I hope you will make good use of your time when with this young friend of yours, and heed well what I have said to you."

That ended the interview and Albert was set at work copying legal documents and at the same time trying to reconcile himself to his new surroundings. That night he wrote to Alice: "I have hired out to a most unmitigated old scoundrel, and yet one of the sharpest lawyers I ever met. He assured me I must lay aside my conscience if I mean to succeed and hinted that he might use me later on as a sort of spy upon Frank, I imagine. He employs a stenographer of uncertain age who comes in and takes dictation and does her work outside. The only stupid thing he has said was to warn me not to flirt with her."

Then he wrote to his friend Frank, telling him where he was located, thanking him for his assistance, and begging him to call at an early date. After that he smoked for an hour in glum silence. His room was small and cheerless, and, in comparison with his home quarters, a mere den. But it was a question of saving, and the luxury of space, even, he could not afford. There is no more lonesome place in the wide world than a great city to one born and bred amid

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the freedom of the wide fields and extended woodlands as Albert had been, and now that he was shut in by brick walls all day, and imprisoned in one small room at night, with a solitary window opening on an area devoted to ash barrels and garbage, it made him homesick. He was a dreamer by nature and loved the music of running brooks, the rustling of winds in the forest, and the song of birds. The grand old mountains that surrounded Sandgate had been the delight of his boyhood, and to fish in the clear streams that tumbled down through narrow gorges and wound amid wide meadows, or in the lily-dotted mill pond, his pastime. He had the artist's nature in him also, and loved dearly to sketch a pretty bit of natural scenery, a cascade in the brook or a shady grotto in the woods. He loved books, flowers, music, green meadows, shady woods, and fields white with daisies. He had been reared among kind-hearted, honest, God-fearing people who seldom locked their doors at night and who believed in and lived by the Golden Rule. The selfish and distrustful life of a great city, with its arrogance and wealth and vanity of display, was not akin to him, and to put himself at the beck and call of a mercenary and utterly unscrupulous old villain, as he believed Frye to be, was gall and bitterness. For two weeks he worked patiently, hoping

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each day that the one and only friend the city held for him would call, passing his evenings, as he wrote Alice, "in reading, smoking, and hating myself a little, and Frye a good deal."

He had hesitated to write Frank in the first place, disliking to ask favors, but it could not be helped, and now he began to feel that his friend meant to ignore him. This humiliating conclusion was growing to a certainty, and Albert feeling more homesick than ever, when one afternoon, while he was as usual hard at work in Frye's office, Frank came in.

"Pray excuse me, old man," remarked that youth briskly, after the first greetings, "for not calling sooner, but I was off on my yacht about the time you came, and then I ran down to New York to take in the cup races. You see, I'm so busy I do not get any time to myself. I want you to come over to the club and lunch with me to-day, and we can talk matters over."

"You will kindly excuse me," replied Albert. "I have a lot of work cut out, and am only allowed one hour for lunch. Can't you come around to my room to-night and have a smoke-talk?"

"Maybe," replied Frank, "and we can go around to the club later. You will meet some good fellows there, and we always make up a game of draw —

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small limit, you know. Say, old man," he added interestedly, "how do you like Frye?"

As that worthy happened to be out just then, the two friends had a good chance to exchange opinions. Albert's is already known, but, for reasons, he did not care to express it to Frank at this time.

"Frye is a shrewd lawyer, I presume," he answered, "and so far I have no fault to find. He takes good care to see I have work enough, but that is what I am hired for, and I have been rather lonesome, and glad of it."

Then to change the subject he added: "I want to thank you once more, Frank, for getting me the place. Things were in a bad way at home, and I needed it."

"You may thank dad, not me," replied Frank; "I was just going off on a trip when your letter came, and I turned the matter over to him. Frye's his attorney, you see."

"Are you personally well acquainted with Mr. Frye?" asked Albert, having an object in mind.

"No, not at all, except by sight," was the answer. "I believe he is considered a very sharp lawyer, and almost invariably wins his cases. Dad says he has won out many times when the law was all against him, and is not over-scrupulous how he does it.

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They say he is rich, and a skinflint. He always reminds me of a hungry buzzard."

Albert thought of Burns' apt cynicism just then, and wished that Frye might for one moment see himself as others saw him. He felt tempted to tell Frank just what Frye had said, and what his opinion of him was, but wisely kept it to himself. Had he been a woman, it is doubtful if he would have shown so much discretion, and not every man would.

"Well, I must be going," said Frank, at last. "I've got a date for the mat., this aft., so ta-ta. I'll call round some eve., at your room, and take you up to the club."

When his friend had departed, Albert resumed his rather monotonous copying the gist of a lot of decisions bearing upon a case that Frye had pending just then, and when he went out to lunch, it was, as usual, alone, and to a cheap restaurant.

"It's nice to have a rich father, a yacht, plenty of money and nothing to do but spend it," he said to himself ruefully that night, as he sat in his cheerless room smoking and dwelling upon the picture of a gay life as disclosed by his friend. "But we are not all born to fortune, and perhaps, after all, I might be worse off," — which, to say the least, is the best way to look at it.

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CHAPTER V

WAYS THAT ARE DARK

WITH "Old Nick" Frye the eleventh commandment, "Thou shalt not get caught," outweighed all the rest. It was not because he especially needed the assistance of Page that he had hired him, although he could serve him in a way; but it was that he could use him as a means to an end in a totally different capacity from copying law reports. John Nason, one of his principal clients, was a wealthy and successful merchant, and both proud and fond of his only son. Frye had heard various stories of the elder Nason, connecting his name with certain good-looking girls that had been or were in his employ, and that vulture, with a keen scent for evil, was only too ready to take advantage of anything, no matter what, so long as it would aid him in his efforts to make the most out of his client. He knew also that Frank was, as the saying goes, "cutting a wide swath." To use the son's friend as a means to reach the son, and through him possibly the father, was considered by Frye a wise stroke of policy.

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When, a few days after Frank had called upon Page, the latter chanced to mention it to Frye, he made a note of it at once.

"I am glad," he said cordially, "that your friend has hunted you up. I knew he was away on his yacht when you came, and was going to suggest that you call on him as soon as I knew he was at home. As I told you, cultivate him all you can. He will serve as a door to get you into good society. When did he call?"

"It was one day while you were out," answered Page, "and he invited me to lunch with him at his club."

"Which of course you did?" said Frye.

"No, sir; I knew I shouldn't have time for it during my one hour, and then, you had given me a lot of work to do that day."

A shade of annoyance came over Frye's face.

"Well, that's all right, of course," he said, "but when he calls again take all the time you need if he asks you out, and," with a scrutinizing look at Page, "as I said, cultivate him. It's business. His father is my most valued client, and the more intimate you become with his son the sooner you will have an acquaintance that will be of value to you."

Page could not quite fathom all this, but the more

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he thought of what Frye had said the more certain he became that kindly regard for his own welfare did not enter into that shrewd schemer's calculations. He was more and more disgusted, also, each day, with his employer's cynical indifference to all sense of honor and honesty, coming to the conclusion that he was no better than a thief at heart.

Beneath Albert's disposition to adapt himself to those he mingled with lay a vein of sterling good sense, fine honor, and the energy of self-sacrifice, if necessary, and Frye's attributes were so obnoxious to him as to be simply repulsive. At college he had never indulged in much "larking," and just why the bond of friendship between himself and the good-natured, self-indulgent, happy-go-lucky classmate, Frank Nason, had been cemented is hard to explain, except upon the theory of the attraction of opposites. When, a few days later, that young man appeared at the office just before closing time, and suggested they "go out for a night's racket," as he phrased it, Albert was not inclined to accept.

"What are you up to?" he said as they walked away from the office, "and what do you mean by a racket? If it's likely to be expensive, count me out; I can't afford it."

"Well," answered Frank lightly, "you are work-

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ing too hard, and need shaking up, so I thought I'd drop round and do it. We will dine at the club, then go to the Castle Square, where there is a burlesque on and no end of pretty chorus girls. I know two or three of them, and after the show we will take them out to supper; that is all."

"It's all right except the end-up," answered Albert, "and on that I think you had best skip me. As I said, it's a diversion I can't afford. I've no money to spare to buy wine for ballet girls."

"Oh, that's all right," responded Frank cheerfully. "I've asked you out and it's my treat. I'll pay the shot this time."

"I shall pay my share if I go," asserted Albert firmly, "but I would rather omit the after part. We will have the evening together and then you can go and entertain your chorus girls and I'll go to my room."

It was a laudable resolution, but it came hard, for beneath all Albert's good resolves was lurking desire for a little excitement to break the dull monotony of his life. He had been to the theatre only twice since he came to Boston, desiring to save in every way he could, and only the week before had sent Alice one-third of his first month's salary. At the club Frank introduced him to several of his friends and of course they were asked to join them in a social glass, which

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did not tend to strengthen Albert's resolution. At the theatre the exhilarating music, and the glitter of a stage full of pretty girls in scant drapery, all had their usual effect, and by the time the show was over he found it next to impossible to resist his friend's urging that they go around to the stage door and meet the girls he had invited to sup with them.

"Mind you, let me pay my share," whispered Page, and then he found himself being introduced by his first name to two highly colored queens of the ballet, and all four proceeded at once to a private supper-room. Albert found the girls bright, vivacious, and expressive, so far as a superficial use of slang goes: they ordered the choicest and highest-priced items on the bill of fare; called for champagne and drank it freely; addressed their escorts as "Cully," "Old Sport," and "Old Stocking;" smoked cigarettes; and talked about their "mashes" in other cities in a way that made Albert grateful that he had been introduced by his first name only.

It was not an immoral proceeding, though not exactly proper, and when in the wee small hours they — with a mistaken sense of gallantry — escorted the two actresses (if such they may be termed) to their boarding-place, Page, at least, was glad to be well rid of them. And when he reached his room, it must be

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said to his credit, he did not feel particularly proud of himself.

He felt less so the next morning when he received a letter from Alice which said:

MY DARLING BROTHER: I was so pleased when I received your loving letter and the money you sent. You do not know how it hurts me to feel we owe so much, and I have cried over it more than you will ever know. Last week I received my first month's pay, — thirty dollars, — and I was very proud of it, for it is the first money I ever earned. I took half and put it with the twenty-five you sent and gave it to Mr. Hobbs. I have only six dollars left, for I had to buy some boots and gloves, but that will last me a month, for I've not the heart to spend a penny I am not obliged to, until the debts are paid. I had to buy the boots, because walking four miles a day wears them out very fast.

And he had spent twenty dollars the night before to have a couple of ballet girls talk slang, smoke cigarettes, and call him "Cully"!

When he thought of his sweet and loving sister, with her perfect faith in his manhood, walking four miles a day to earn less than two dollars, while he had been induced to spend in one foolish evening as much as she could earn in two weeks, it was no wonder he did not feel proud of himself.

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CHAPTER VI

A PUSH DOWNWARD

"He digged a pit, he digged it deep,
He digged it for a brother;
But oh, alas! he fell into
The pit he digged for another."

Old Saw.

PAGE was a little late at the office the next morning and Frye was there ahead of him.

"I was out with young Nason last evening," he explained, as the old lawyer bade him a rather crusty good morning, "and I overslept."

"Oh, that is all right," responded Frye, in an instantaneously sweetened tone, "I am glad you were, and, as I told you, you are wise to cultivate him. I suppose," he continued with a leer, "that you were buying wine for some of the gay girls?"

Page looked confused. "Well, we went to the theatre, and after that had a late supper," he explained, "and it was after one before I returned to my room."

"I don't care how late you are out, or what you

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did," said Frye, still eyeing Page, "so long as you were with young Nason and kept out of the lockup. His father pays me a salary to look after his law business, and his son is the pride of his heart. I trust you understand my meaning. If you don't feel like work this morning," he continued suavely, "mount your wheel and take a run out to Winchester and see if that mortgage on the Seaver estate has been satisfied. The exercise and air will do you good."

Page was nonplussed.

"He has some deep-laid plot in his mind," he thought as he looked at Frye, who, having delivered this amazing pat, turned at once to his mail. It was all the more amazing because at the start he had been assured that punctuality and good conduct on his part were obligatory. Now he was to all intents and purposes not only told he might lark it with young Nason all he chose, but even urged to do so. He was glad to escape the office, however, for his head felt full of bees, and thanking his employer for the permission, he quickly left the city behind him. The crisp October air and exercise soon cured his headache, and in a measure drove away some of the self-reproaches at his own foolish conduct of the night before.

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The errand at Winchester was attended to, and then, after taking a glass of bromo-seltzer, he headed back for the city, taking another course. By the time he reached town he was faint from hunger, for he had eaten no breakfast. A good dinner restored him to his natural self-possession, and then he went to the office.

For a week he reproached himself every time he thought how much his escapade had cost, and felt too ashamed to answer Alice's letter. When he did he assured that innocent sister that he was saving all he could and should send more money as soon as possible. Frank called twice, and the second time urged him to join the club, to which Page assented.

"It will serve as a place to spend a lonesome evening," he thought. It was a wise step, for it is during lonesome hours, if ever, that one's steps are turned toward evil associations.

Several times Frye had made casual inquiries as to the progress of his intimacy with young Nason, all of which led Page to wonder what his object was and why it concerned him. At last, one day just at closing time, and after he had told the office boy he might go, Frye let a little light into that enigma.

"Sit down a moment, Mr. Page," he remarked, as the latter was preparing to leave; "I have a proposi-

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tion of an important nature to make to you," and then as he fixed his merciless eyes on his clerk and began to slowly rub his hands together, he continued: "You have been nearly three months in my employ, Mr. Page, and have fulfiled your duties satisfactorily. I think the time has come when I may safely enlarge them a little. As I told you, John Nason pays me a yearly retainer to attend to all his law business. I have reason to feel he is not entirely satisfied to continue that arrangement, and I am forced to find some way to bring a little pressure to bear on him in order that he may see it is for his interest to still retain me. Now I believe John Nason is not entirely happy in his home relations and is leading a double life, and that a certain Miss Maud Vernon, a cashier in his store, receives a share of his attentions. She and a supposed aunt of hers occupy a flat in a block owned by Nason, and while they are never seen in public together, gossip links their names. What I want is for you to find out, through your acquaintance with the Nasons, just what bond there is between the elder Nason and this Miss Vernon, and report to me. I do not intend to use the knowledge for any illegal purpose, but merely as a leverage to retain Nason's business. I am aware that to prosecute your inquiries discreetly by means of your intimacy with young

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Nason will require more money than I am paying you, and therefore, if I can depend on you to do a little detective work, I shall from now on increase your salary from seventy-five to one hundred and seventy-five dollars. What do you say?"

The first impulse that Page felt was to absolutely refuse, there and then, to have anything to do with Frye's nefarious scheme, but the thought of his situation, the unpaid debt at home, and the certainty that a refusal would mean a loss of his position conquered his pride and kept him silent. For a moment he reflected, trying hard to see a way out of the dilemma; and then said:

"It is rather a hard task you ask, Mr. Frye, for I am not accustomed to the role of detective, but I am in your employ, and as long as I am I will do the best I can for your interests."

It was a temporizing reply, and Frye so construed it at once.

"I must insist, if you accept my offer," he said, "that you give me your promise to do your best to earn the money. It doesn't pay to be too squeamish in this world," he continued, in a soothing tone; "all business is to a certain extent a game of extortion — a question of do the other fellow or he will do you." Then arising, and holding out a skinny hand to grasp

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Page's, as if to bind the bargain, he added: "I shall expect you to keep faith with me, Mr. Page," and the interview ended.

When Albert entered the dining-room at his boarding-place that night he felt as if his face must show guilt, and when later he met Frank at the club that feeling increased. He was preoccupied and morose, and Frank, noticing his frame of mind, tried to cheer him.

"You look as if you had been given a facer, old man," he said. "What is the matter? Has Frye been calling you down for something?"

Page looked at his friend a moment, and the impulse to make a clean breast of it, and relieve his feelings, was strong, but he did not.

"I do not like Frye," he said instead, "and the more I see of him the less I like him. At times he makes me feel as if he was a snake ready to uncoil and strike. Did you ever notice his eyes, and the way he has of rubbing his hands when talking?"

"I have," was the answer, "and he has the most hideous eyes I ever saw in a human being. They look like a cat's in the dark. Dad told me once he saw Frye look at a witness he was cross-examining in such a way that the poor fellow forgot what his name was, and swore black was white. Those eyes are

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vicious weapons, they say, and he uses them to the utmost when he wants to scare a witness."

"They make me feel creepy every time I look at them," said Albert, and then, as if anxious to change the subject, he added, "Let's leave here, Frank, and you come with me to my room, where we can have a quiet talk together. I am in the dumps to-night, and want to unbosom my troubles to you."

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CHAPTER VII

A SERMON

"WHAT ails you, old man?" asked Frank, after they were seated in Albert's room and were smoking fraternal pipes; "you look as if you had lost your best friend."

"I did, last June, as you know," was the rather sad answer, "and on top of that, I hate myself for one or two things; for instance, the escapade we indulged in the other night, and being Frye's slave, for another."

"I am sorry for the first," responded Frank; "it was my fault that you were coaxed into it. I won't do it again, I assure you. Don't worry over it, my boy. It wasn't anything serious; only just a little after-theatre fun, and hearing those sporty girls talk slang."

"Yes, and spending a lot of money for very poor fun," replied Albert. "I don't think any better of myself for doing it, do you?"

"Oh, I don't think about it one way or the other," answered Frank, "I have so much time to kill, and

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that's no worse than any other way. We go to the theatre and see those same girls half nude and hear them say just as naughty things as they said to us that night, so what's the harm? We are a little nearer to them, that is all, and pay extra for the privilege."

"Well, of course it's all right, and as you do not think any the less of yourself for doing it, there is no harm," replied Albert, "only I do; and so it is worse for me than for you." Then he added, looking curiously at his friend, "Tell me honestly, Frank, did you enjoy having cigarette smoke puffed in your face, being called 'Cully,' and hearing silly brag about 'mashes,' and how they 'worked' some other fellow? Did it occur to you that those same rouge-finished queens of the ballet would describe us, and how they 'worked' us for a wine supper, to other jays, and that no doubt they have done so to one or a dozen since that night? They were pert and saucy, it is true, and up to date so far as slang goes, but did you really enjoy their society?"

"No, I can't say I did," was the sober answer, "only there was a spice of excitement about it, a sort of novelty. I would not want it every night, however."

"And while I am about it," continued Albert, warming up, "did you notice that those same fairies of the

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footlights had been so busy putting red paint on their lips and black lead on their eyelashes that they forgot to use a toothbrush, and left their finger-nails in mourning? And what is more to the point, was there one word they uttered that you and I could not have forestalled long before it fell from their lips? Now you have a mother and sisters who think well of you, no doubt: how would you have felt to have had any one of them peep in that night and see what manner of company you were in? My mother is in her grave, but maybe she could see where I was and with whom I was that evening, and the thought makes me feel mean. I have a sister, one of the purest and sweetest little women God ever blessed the earth with, and not for all that I can earn in one year would I have her know what a foolish thing I did. For two days I was so ashamed of myself I felt miserably."

Frank sat in stupefied silence at his friend's outburst. "If I had imagined you were going to feel that way, old man," he said at last, "I would never have urged you to go with me. I never will again, I assure you."

"Oh, I am as much to blame as you," observed Albert. "I went willingly, but after it was all over I was sorry I did. I am no prude, I enjoy a little excitement and don't mind a social evening with a few

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friends, but it doesn't pay to do things you despise yourself for the next day."

"But," put in his friend with a quizzical look, "do you know you are preaching a sermon, and I rather enjoy it, too? It sets me thinking. As for such girls as we wined, I don't care a rap for them. If I could find any other and better amusement, they might go hang for all I care. What you say of them is true enough, and I agree with you they are a profitless lot of trash, but what is a fellow going to do to kill time? I try tennis and golf with fellows and girls in our set, but that is tame sport. I go to 'functions' once in a while, and if I dance twice with a pretty girl who has no *dot*, mother glares at me, and says I've no family pride. Most of the girls talk silly nonsense that wearies a fellow, and the more *passé* they are the worse they gush. The only thing I really enjoy that is respectable is yachting, and then I have trouble to find good fellows who have time to go with me. Once in a while I get disgusted with myself, and wish I had to work for a living."

Albert looked surprised. Was it possible that this young and handsome fellow, with dark brown honest eyes, curly black hair, and garb and manner of refinement, who never had known what it was to work,

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really wanted to earn his own way in the world, just from sheer *ennui?*

"Frank," he said at last, "you ought to be ashamed to talk so. You have plenty of money, nothing to do but enjoy yourself, and yet you complain! You ought to have a few months of old Frye. It would reconcile you to your lot."

Frank looked sympathetic. "Is he so bad as that?" he said.

"No worse than any other old skinflint who feels he owns you, body and brains," replied Albert, "but I do not want to talk about him to-night. I've got the blues."

"I am sorry, old man," rejoined Frank in a low tone, "I wish I could help you. Maybe I can in the near future."

Albert was silent, while the comparison of his lot with that of his friend passed slowly in review.

"It seems to me you have everything to be thankful for, Frank," he said at last in a dejected tone, — "a kind father, good home, plenty of friends, a nice yacht, all the money you want, and nothing to do. With me it is different. Would it bore you if I unloaded a little of my history? I feel like it to-night."

"Not a bit," answered Frank, "I would really like to hear it. I didn't know much of your home affairs

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at college, and since you came to Boston I hated to ask you, for fear you would think me impertinent."

"Well," continued Albert, "when we were at college I was a little too proud to let you know I was the only son of a poor widow who was denying herself every luxury to educate me; but it was a fact. After we separated, I tutored some, read law, and was admitted to the bar. I opened an office in my native town and wasted a year waiting for clients, while I read novels, sketched, and fished, to pass the time. Last June my mother died and left my sister and me an old house that has been in the family over a century, a few acres of meadow lands, and maybe two hundred dollars in debts. Then I wrote to you. I was more than grateful for the chance you obtained for me to work for even such a man as Frye. I am paying those debts as fast as I can, and my sister is helping by teaching in a cross-road schoolhouse and walking four miles each day to do it."

"And I coaxed you to go out and spend money on a couple of ballet girls!" responded Frank regretfully. "Say, old man," reaching out his hand and clasping Albert's, "if I had known all this that evening I would have bit my tongue before I asked you to go with me."

"That is all right," replied Albert; "I should have

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told you that night what I have told you now, but maybe I was a little ashamed to do so."

"I would like to see that brave sister of yours," said Frank after a pause. "From what you tell me, she must be a trump."

Albert made no answer, but going to the mantel he took a framed photograph that stood there and handed it to his friend. It was a picture of a young girl with a face like an artist's dream and eyes like two pansies.

Frank gazed at it long and earnestly. "Your sister, I suppose," he said at last, still looking at the face. "I do not wonder you preached me the sermon you have this evening. You must be proud of her."

When it came time for him to go the two shook hands with a warmer clasp than ever, and when he was gone the little room did not seem quite so cheerless to its occupant as before.

Albert Page had builded wiser than he knew.

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CHAPTER VIII

A HELPING HAND

"I SHOULD like to be excused to-morrow forenoon, Mr. Frye," said Albert a few days later. "Frank has promised to introduce me to his father."

"Certainly," replied Frye, cheerfully, "take the entire day, if you wish, and if you have a good chance try to make the acquaintance of Miss Maud Vernon, a cashier in Mr. Nason's store, or at least take a good look at her. She is the key that will unlock the information I need, and I shall depend upon you to obtain it."

"I will keep my eyes open," replied Albert aloud, mentally resolving that it would not be in the interest of Frye and his sinister plot. The next day he met Frank by appointment, and the two called upon John Nason at his office. Albert was greeted cordially, and, after an exchange of commonplaces, soon found himself being interrogated by a series of questions pertaining to his home and college life, his knowledge of law, and how he liked his present employer, all of

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which with their answers, not being pertinent to the thread of this narrative, need not be quoted. They were for a purpose, however, as all of John Nason's business questions were, and at their conclusion he said:

"I am glad to have met you, Mr. Page. My son has spoken in the highest terms of you, and what has interested me more, Mr. Frye has also. He does not usually bestow much praise on any one, but is more apt to sneer. After you are a little better acquainted with legal proceedings here, come and see me. I may be able to do something for you. You might," addressing Frank, as if to end the interview, "show Mr. Page over the store now; it may interest him."

After an hour spent walking through the vast human hive, where over one thousand clerks and salesgirls were employed, the two friends returned to their club for lunch.

"Well, what do you think of the old gent?" asked Frank, as he sat down.

"I like him," was the answer; "he talks to the purpose, though, and I fancy his rapid-fire questions were for an object."

"You may be sure they were," replied Frank, "and, what is more, I saw by his expression that you had made a good impression. Do you know what I did the other day? I told him all about our escapade

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with the two fairies, and repeated all I could recall of the sermon you preached about it."

Albert looked astonished.

"I am sorry you did that," he said; "he must have thought me very weak not to have refused in the first place. What did he say?"

"Oh, not much," replied Frank; "he laughed, and said he guessed the closer I stuck to you, the better I would behave myself."

"Do you make a practice of confessing all your larks to your father?" observed Albert.

"Oh, I don't conceal much," answered Frank laughingly; "he and I are the best of friends, and he is so good to me I haven't the heart to deceive him. I had an object in telling him of our racket, however;" and then after a pause, "I wish you were to be at liberty this afternoon, Bert; I am going to take the 'Gypsy' round to Beverly to her winter quarters and I'd like your company."

"Well, I can go if I've a mind to," answered Albert; "Frye said I might take a day off if I wished."

Frank looked astonished. "Isn't he in danger of heart-failure?" he said; "the old buzzard must be getting stuck on you, I should say."

When the two had boarded the yacht, and while

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the engineer was getting up steam, Frank showed his guest all over that craft.

"I am surprised at the size of your boat," said Albert; "why, she is large enough for an ocean voyage."

"We may take one in her some day," replied Frank; "stranger things have happened. I believe she cost over eighty thousand dollars, but dad bought her for less than half that at an assignee's sale."

When steam was up they took a run out around Minot's Light and across to Cape Ann, and as the day was a delightful one, Albert enjoyed it immensely.

"I can't imagine a more charming way of spending a summer than to have such a craft as this and a well-chosen party of friends for company, and go where you like. Why, it would seem like a dream of life in an enchanted world to me."

It was late in the afternoon when they ran in past Baker's Island, and at Beverly they went ashore, and leaving the crew to moor the yacht in the stream between the two bridges, returned to Boston.

It was almost Thanksgiving time ere Albert saw Mr. Nason again, and then one day Frank said to him: "I want you to call on dad to-morrow. He wants to see you."

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It came as a most agreeable surprise to Albert, and yet, as he entered that magnate's palatial store the next day, he did not dare to allow himself to hope that it would mean anything to him. He took the elevator to the fourth floor, where Mr. Nason's private office was, and with beating heart entered. His greeting was more cordial than before, and Mr. Nason, who, it may be observed, was a man that went about business as a woodcutter chops a tree, said:

"Are you under contract or obligation to remain with Mr. Frye any specified time, Mr. Page?"

"Nothing more than to give him a reasonable notice that I wish to quit," replied Albert; "I am paid so much a month 'for the present,' as he put it when I went there, and I certainly shall leave him as soon as I see any chance of bettering myself."

"That being the case, I see no reason why you cannot entertain the proposition I have decided to make you," said the merchant, "which is that you sever your relations with Mr. Frye between now and the first of the year, and then take hold and see what you can do in looking after my legal matters. The fact is, Mr. Page, as I intimated to you a short time ago, I am not entirely satisfied with Mr. Frye. Just why need not be considered now. The only point is, do you feel yourself capable of acting as my attorney

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and assuming charge of any law business that may arise?"

"Well, so far as my knowledge of the law goes," replied Albert, "I passed a good examination when I was admitted to the bar, I had some practice in Sandgate, and since I've been with Frye I've learned a good deal of the usual procedure here. I think I can do all that is necessary."

"My needs in a legal line are not complicated," continued Mr. Nason; "it is mostly looking up deeds and making transfers, seeing that titles are clear, etc. You will have to watch the custom officers, and there are more or less collections to be made. Occasionally I have to resort to the courts, but try to avoid them as much as possible."

"I think I could attend to all such matters to your satisfaction," said Albert confidently; "they are not hard tasks."

"Very well," replied Mr. Nason. "I have decided, partly at the request of my son and partly from my own estimate of your ability, to give you the trial. I will pay you twenty-five hundred dollars per annum to look after my needs, and you are also at liberty to take such other business as comes to you so long as you do not neglect mine."

"I thank you, Mr. Nason, for this offer," replied

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Albert, rising and proffering his hand, "and I accept gladly and will devote all my time, if need be, to your service."

"Very good," responded Mr. Nason; "separate yourself from Frye at once, or between now and the new year, and in the meantime I would suggest that you rent a suitable office. There are one or two vacant in a building I own on Water street that will serve very well, and when you are through with Mr. Frye, come and see me. I shall consider you in my employ from now on, and as you may need funds in fitting up your office, I will advance you a little on your salary," and without further comment he turned to his desk and wrote and handed Albert a check for five hundred dollars. "I should prefer," he added hastily, as if to prevent any word of thanks, "that you make no mention whatever of our agreement to Mr. Frye, or in fact to any one, until after January first." Then rising and offering his hand to Albert as if to dismiss him, he added:

"Come out to my house any evening, Mr. Page; we shall be glad to see you, and I am usually at home."

There are moments when our emotions nullify all attempts at speech, and to Albert Page, who before had felt himself alone and almost friendless in a great city, this was such a one.

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"Never mind the thanks now," said Mr. Nason, as he saw Albert's agitation; "put your thanks into your work, and in a year we will talk it over."

"And this is the man I had almost hired myself out to spy upon!" said Albert to himself as he left the store.

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CHAPTER IX

SHARP PRACTICE

For a few days after his interview with John Nason Albert tried to find some plausible excuse for leaving Frye. He did not want to make an enemy of him, and more especially now that he was to succeed him as John Nason's legal adviser. He knew that Frye would know he could not easily better himself, and would reason that, unknown and without money in a great city as he was, it would be some unusual opening that would make him turn away from what Frye considered a large salary. Then again, he had promised Mr. Nason not to disclose their agreement to Frye, and more than that, he felt in honor bound not to let Frye even suspect it. It was while perplexed with the situation and trying to solve it that it solved itself in an unexpected way.

Frye was out that day, and Albert was, as he had been for three days, thinking how to escape, when a red-faced and rather bellicose sort of a man came in and inquired for Frye.

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"My name is Staples," he said, "and I've got a lawsuit on my hands. I've laid the facts before your partner, I s'pose, but I thought I'd just drop in and give him a few pointers that might help my case."

"What is your case?" asked Albert, a little amused at being taken for Frye's partner.

"Wal, the facts are," replied Staples, "I've had to sue a miserable whelp in self-defence. I live in Lynnfield. It's a small place about ten miles out, and last spring I bought the good will, stock in trade, an' all of a man by the name of Hunt, who was in the meat business. He signed a paper, too, agreein' not to engage in the business in or within ten miles o' Lynnfield for a period o' five years, and a month ago he opened a shop almost 'cross the street from me and is cuttin' my prices right and left, confound him."

"And you are bringing an action for breach of contract?" interposed Albert, thinking to have a little fun at the expense of his caller.

"I'm a-suin' him for ten thousand dollars' damage, if that's what you mean," replied the belligerent Staples. "I won't get it all, but then, as your partner said, we may get more than if we sued for less. Law's a big game of bluff, I reckon."

Albert smiled. "And so you are basing your suit on this signed agreement, are you?" he said; "well,

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you might as well stop just now, for you have no case in law, though no doubt a good one in justice."

"But the agreement is all signed and witnessed," exclaimed Staples, "and Mr. Frye said I had good reason to bring suit, and I've paid him two hundred dollars on account to do it."

"That may be," said Albert, realizing he had put his foot in it, so to speak, "and perhaps you have other grounds to base a suit for damages on, but as for the agreement this man Hunt signed, it's of no value whatever."

"Then why in thunder did Frye tell me I had a good case, and take my money?" gasped the irate Staples.

"That I can't say," replied Albert, foreseeing the rumpus he had started, "you'd better come to-morrow and have a talk with him. He may have seen some loophole for you to win out through that I do not see, but so far as your agreement goes, it's not worth the paper it's written on."

When the law-thirsty Staples had departed it dawned upon Albert that he had unintentionally paved the way for his own escape from Frye. "I'll stay away to-morrow," he said to himself, "and let Staples get in his work, and then face the inevitable storm that I have started." He had surmised the

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results accurately, for when, two days later, he purposely reached the office late, Frye did not even bid him good morning.

"Where were you yesterday?" he said curtly, as Albert entered.

"I was availing myself of your express wish that I cultivate young Nason," was the answer. "We went to Beverly to see to the housing-in of his yacht for the winter."

"And what did you say to Mr. Staples the day before, I would like to know?" continued Frye in a sneering tone. "He has retained me for an action for breach of contract, and you have told him he had no grounds for suit. He came in yesterday, mad as a wet hen, and wanted his money back. Are you a fool?"

"Maybe I am," replied Albert, trying hard to keep cool, "but I do not care to be told of it. Mr. Staples explained his case to me, and I inadvertently told him that the agreement he held was of no value in law, which is the truth."

"And what has that to do with it?" said Frye, with biting sarcasm. "I didn't hire you to tell the truth and lose me a paying client. If that is your idea of law practice you had better go back to Sandgate and hoe corn for a living. I knew very well his agreement

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was of no value, but that was a matter for him to find out, not for us to tell him. You have made a mess of it now, and lost me several hundred dollars in fees."

Albert had remained standing through all this tirade, and looking squarely at his irate employer.

"You need not say any more," he put in, when Frye had paused for breath; "if you will further oblige me with a check for the small balance due me, I will not again upset your plans. You need not," he added, feeling himself blush, "consider that you owe me any part of the increase you recently promised. I do not want it."

It was Frye's turn to be astonished now. That this verdant limb of the law, as he considered Albert to be, could have the manliness to show any resentment at his scourging, and what was more surprising, coolly resign a good position, he could not understand. For a few minutes the two looked at each other, and then Frye, for reasons of his own, weakened first.

"You are foolish," he said, in a modified tone, "to act so hastily. Perhaps I have spoken rather rudely, but you must admit you gave me provocation. Do not throw away a good chance for a few hasty words."

"I do not care to discuss it," answered Albert firmly; "the role of private detective that you want me to assume is not to my taste, anyway, and your

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words have convinced me we can never get along together. I will not remain longer on any terms."

"And what will you do now?" sneered Frye, a sinister look entering his yellow eyes, "steal or starve?"

"Neither," replied Albert defiantly; "I'll go back to Sandgate and hoe corn first."

Then, as a realizing sense of how much he was in the power of this courageous stripling came to Frye, his arrogance all melted, and as he turned and began to play with a paper-cutter he said meekly:

"Come, Mr. Page, overlook it all. I spoke too hastily, and I apologize."

It was the guilty coward conquering the brute instinct, but it availed not.

"Will you oblige me with the small balance due me to-day," asked Albert, "or shall I call again for it?"

"And if we part company now," muttered Frye, "what am I to expect? Are you to be a friend or an enemy?"

"If you refer to your scheme to blackmail John Nason," replied Albert resolutely, and not mincing words, "I am too ashamed to think I ever listened to your proposals to even speak of it."

It was a hard blow and made Frye wince, for it was the first time he had ever been openly called a

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villain, but, craven hypocrite that he was, he made no protest. Instead, he silently wrote a check for Albert's due and handed it to him.

"I am much obliged, Mr. Frye. Good morning, sir," said Albert in a chilly tone, and putting on his hat, he left the office.

When the door was closed behind him he turned, shook his fist at it, and muttered: "You miserable old villainous vulture! I am glad I saved one victim from being robbed by you!"

But Albert cooled off in time. We always do.

That night when he met Frank at the club he grasped one of that young man's hands in both of his and as he shook it, exclaimed:

"If you were Alice now, I would hug and kiss you!"

"Well," responded Frank, "if you were Alice now, all I can say is, it would meet my entire approbation; but tell me what ails you? Have you had a fortune left you?"

"Yes and no," replied Albert; "your father has given me the chance of a lifetime and I am free from old Frye. I have you to thank for the chance, I am sure."

"Well, I put in a good word for you when I had the opportunity," said Frank modestly, "and the ser-

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mon you preached me once, and which I reported to dad, may have had some weight with him."

In a week Albert had his office fitted up, and then he presented himself to John Nason, and after that he not only had all the responsibility thrust upon him that he was able to assume, but he no longer felt himself in the position of a menial. To one of his proud spirit it meant self-respect, life, and sunshine.

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CHAPTER X

AMID THE GREEN MOUNTAINS

THERE are two characteristics sure to be found among the residents of a small country village, and those are kindness of heart and a love of gossip. The former showed itself in Sandgate when Albert Page went to those his family were indebted to, and, with much humiliation to himself, asked them to wait. Mr. Hobbs' reply is all that is necessary to quote, as it was a reflex of all the others.

"Don't ye worry one whit, Mr. Page," he said; "take your own time, an' if it's a year it's no matter. The only reason I called with the bill was because it's customary when an estate is bein' settled. Tell your folks I expect and want 'em to keep right on tradin' with me."

When Alice appealed to Mr. Mears she also met only the kindest of words.

"Ye can drive back an' forth, an' not be away from home over night," said he, "till snow comes an' then I'll git ye a boardin'-place clus by the

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schoolhouse and fetch and carry ye Mondays and Fridays."

The love of gossip showed itself as distinctly in a general discussion by the townsfolk of the affairs of the Pages. For a month after Albert had gone away and Alice had begun teaching, they were the subject of much after-church and sewing-circle talk.

"If Alice could only git married now," observed Mrs. Mears, who was perhaps the leader among the gossips in Sandgate, "it 'ud be the most fortunit thing that could happen, but she holds her head perty middlin' high for a poor girl, which p'raps is nat'ral, she comin' from one o' the oldest families. They say there wa'n't nothin' left to either on 'em when the Widder Page died, an' the wonder is how she managed to git along as well as she did."

Fortunately none of this gossip, of which Mrs. Mears' remarks are only a sample, reached Alice, for she had enough to bear as it was. The vexations of an effort to pound the rudiments of an education into the heads of two dozen or so barefooted boys and girls that comprised her charge were far less hard to bear than the desolation of a home bereft of mother and brother. Occasionally some one of the neighbors would drop in of an evening, or one or two of her girl friends come and stay all night. On Sundays

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she was, as she always had been, a regular attendant at the village church, where she formed one of the choir. She had never encouraged the attentions of any of the young men, who mostly wore the habiliments of farmers on week days and worse-fitting ones on Sundays, which accounted for Mrs. Mears' remark that "she held her head perty middlin' high." It was true in a way, not from any false pride, but rather because Alice was of a more refined and fastidious nature than those who "would a-wooing go."

She was like a flower herself, not only in looks, but in delicacy of feeling and sentiment, and her sweet face, sheltered by a mourning-hat on Sunday at church, was a magnet that drew the eyes of many a village swain. The days and weeks of her new life as a teacher passed in uneventful procession until one by one the leaves had fallen from the two big elm trees in front of the desolate home, the meadows were but level fields of snow, and Christmas was only two weeks away. Then she received a letter from the absent brother that caused her heart to beat with unusual excitement. It read:

DEAR SIS: Three weeks ago I received a most flattering proposal from Mr. Nason, Frank's father, who offered me a good salary to take charge of his law business, and also the chance to accept anything else that came my way. I have a

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nice office now in a block he owns, and am so busy I do not find time to write to you even. It's an opening of a lifetime, and I owe it mainly to Frank. Now I am so homesick I am coming up to spend Christmas with you, and I've invited Frank to come also. We shall be up the day before and stay till the Monday after. Frank has done so much for me that I want to entertain him in the best way possible. He knows absolutely nothing about country life, and it may be dull for him, but he seems desirous of coming, and so I want you to help me to make it cheerful for him. To be candid, sis, I think the chance to see you, whom he has heard me say so much about, is the real loadstone. I enclose a bit of paper, and I want you to use it all in any way you wish.

It was a check for one hundred dollars!

It was not strange that at school next day Alice's thoughts were not on the recitations, and when one boy spelled beauty "b-o-o-t-i-e," and raised a laugh, she did not understand why it was. Children are in some ways as keen as briers, and her pupils soon discovered that "teacher" was absent-minded and they whispered right and left. When she discovered it she didn't have the heart to punish them, and was glad when the time came to dismiss school.

The instinct of her sex was strong within her, however, and that night she said to Aunt Susan:

"Do you think, auntie, we could manage between us to make up some sort of a pretty house-dress? Of

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course I must wear black when I go out, but it would be no harm to wear something brighter at home. I could get some delicate gray cashmere, and Mrs. Sloper can cut and fit it, and you and I can make it evenings. I want a sort of house-gown trimmed with satin. I wish I dared to have a new hat for church, with a little color in it, — my mourning-bonnet makes me look so old, — but I am afraid people would talk."

The feminine fear of looking old was needless in her case.

But how the days dragged, and how many times she counted them to see how many more were to pass ere that dearly beloved brother was to arrive! And what sort of a looking fellow was this Frank? she wondered. She hoped he was tall and dark, not too tall, but good and stout. And how could she ever entertain them? She could play and sing a few pretty ballads, and any number of hymns, but as for conversation she felt herself wholly deficient. Of the world of art, literature, and the drama she knew but little. She had read a good many novels, it is true, and had seen "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "East Lynne," and one or two other tear-moving dramas played in the town hall, but that was all. She had never even journeyed as far as Boston or New York. "He will think me as green as the hills around us," she thought ruefully, "but I

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can't help it. I can cook some nice things for him to eat, anyhow, and Bert must do the talking. I wonder if he plays the piano. I hope not, for if he does I'll not touch it."

Christmas came on Thursday that year and her school was to close for a week on the Friday before. She had a little plan in her mind, and the last day of school she called on two of the big boys to help her.

"My brother is coming home to spend Christmas," she said to them, "and I want a lot of ground-pine to trim up the house. Will you bring me some?"

If there is anything that will touch a country boy's heart it is to have "teacher" — and especially a young and pretty teacher — ask him to go for ground-pine; so it is needless to say that Alice was supplied with an ample outfit of that graceful vine. More than that, they begged for the privilege of helping her festoon it, and when long ropes of it were draped over the windows and above the fireplace in the big parlor, and the hall and dining-room received the same decoration, the house presented a cheerful appearance. The culinary department was not neglected either, and a great store of pies, frosted cake, and doughnuts was prepared.

"I do not know what I should do without you, Aunt Susan," the fair young hostess said the day

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before the guests were to arrive; "I couldn't do this all alone, and I want to give Bert a welcome."

It may be surmised that consideration for that big brother was not the sole force that moved her, but the veil that shelters the heart of a sweet young girl must not be rudely drawn aside. She had written: "I shall be only too glad to do all in my power, in my poor way, to entertain your friend who has done so much for you," and we will let that disclosure of gratitude suffice.

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CHAPTER XI

BY THE FIRESIDE

"You must not expect much excitement up in Sandgate," Albert said to his friend the day they started for that quiet village. "It is a small place, and all the people do in the winter is to chop wood, shovel snow, eat, and go to meeting. We shall go sleighing and I shall take you to church to be stared at, and for the rest Alice and Aunt Susan will give us plenty to eat."

It must be admitted that this same Alice, whose picture had so interested him, was the attraction which made young Nason glad to accept his friend's cordial invitation, and then he really felt a very warm friendship for that friend. It is likely that the perfect sincerity and wholesome ideas of Albert attracted and held his rather more pliable and easy-going nature. The strong attract the weak, among men, and Frank Nason, never having been hardened by adversity, looked up to and admired the man who had courage and perseverance. He wondered if Alice

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was like him, and rather hoped not. It was nearly dark and snowing when they reached Sandgate, and when he saw a plump girlish figure with slightly whitened garments rush forward, almost jump into his friend's arms, and kiss him vehemently, it occurred to him that a welcome home by such a sister was worth coming many miles for.

Then he heard his name mumbled in a hurried introduction and, as he raised his hat, saw this girl withdraw a small hand from a mitten and offer it to him.

"I am very glad to meet you, Mr. Nason," she said with a bright smile; "my brother has told me so much about you I feel almost acquainted." And then, turning to that brother, she added: "I have the horse hitched outside, Bert, so we will go right home."

She led the way, and when they had stowed their belongings in the sleigh she said, "You can hold me in your lap, Bert, and I'll drive. I'm used to it now." She chirruped to the rather docile horse, and as the bells began to jingle she added: "What have you got in that box, Bertie?"

"Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no fibs, Miss Curious," he answered. "Wait until to-morrow and then I'll show you."

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When they drove into the yard he said: "Take Frank right in, sis, and I'll unharness."

It was quite dark now, but Frank noticed, as he gathered up the bags and bundles and followed his hostess, that the rather stately house was aglow with light.

"Leave your hat and coat here in the hall, Mr. Nason," she said cordially, "and go right into the parlor and get warm. You will kindly excuse me now. I'm first and second girl, housemaid and cook, and I must go and help Aunt Susan to get supper ready. You two gentlemen are hungry, I'm sure."

It was not a formal reception, but it was a cordial one, which was better, and when Frank entered the parlor he was surprised at the cheerful sight, for the room was festooned all around with ropes of evergreen. The long mantel over the fireplace, bright with flames, was banked with a mass of green, and against each white lace curtain hung a wreath. In one corner stood an upright piano, in sharp contrast with the rather antique hair-cloth chairs and sofa. He had just drawn a chair to the fire, when Albert came in and gave a low whistle at the sight of the decorations. "That's one of the perquisites of a country school-ma'am," he observed, "and I'll bet the boys that gathered all this green for Alice enjoyed

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getting it. I used to when I was a boy. Well, old fellow," he added, addressing Frank, "here we are, and you must make yourself at home."

Then Alice came in and announced supper, and after Aunt Susan had been introduced, they all sat down. It was an old-fashioned meal, for while the brother helped to the ham and eggs and fried potatoes, Aunt Susan served the quince preserves and passed the hot biscuit, and Alice poured the tea. The table too had a Christmas touch, for around the mat where the lamp stood was a green wreath brightened with clusters of red berries. It was all a charming picture, and not the least of it was the fair girl who so graciously played the hostess. When the meal was over she said:

"Now you two gentlemen must go into the parlor and smoke, and I'll join you later. I command you to smoke," she added imperiously, "for I want the house to smell as if there was a man around."

When she came in later, wearing her new house-dress, she drew her chair close to her brother's and resting her elbows on his knee and her chin in her open palms she looked up and said with a witching smile:

"Now, Bertie, I've fed you nicely, haven't I? and I've done all I could for your comfort, so now

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please tell me what is in that long flat box you brought."

It was charmingly done, but the big brother was proof against her wiles. "You are a bewitching coaxer, sis," he answered, "but I am hard-hearted. I'll make a trade with you, though. First tell us all about your school-teaching and sing us all the songs I ask for, and then I'll open the box."

"You are very modest in your wants," she replied archly, "but like all men you must be humored to keep you good-natured, I presume."

"I wish you would tell us about your school, Miss Page," put in Frank; "you are not a bit like the schoolma'am of my boyhood, and I would like to know how you manage children."

"Well, it was a little hard at first," she answered, "for boys and girls of ten and twelve have surprisingly keen intuitions, and it seemed to me they made a study of my face from the first and concluded I was soft-hearted. I had one little boy that was a born mischief-maker, but he had such winsome ways I had to love him in spite of it. But he had to be punished some way, and so one day I kept him after school and then told him I must whip him hard, but not at that time. I explained to him what I was going to punish him for, 'but,' I said, 'I shall not do it to-night. I may

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do it to-morrow or the day after, but I will not tell you when the whipping is to come until I am ready to do it.' My little plan was a success, for the next night he waited till all the rest had gone, and then came to me with tears in his eyes, and begged me to whip him then. I didn't, though, and told him I wouldn't until he disobeyed again. He has been the most obedient boy in the school ever since. There is one little girl who has won my heart, though, in the oddest way you can imagine. The day I received your letter, Bert, I was so happy that the school ran riot, and I never knew it. They must have seen it in my face, I think. Well, when school was out, this girl, a shy little body of ten, sidled up to my desk and said, 'Pleath may I kith you, teacher, 'fore I go home?' It was such an odd and pretty bit of feeling, it nearly brought tears to my eyes."

"I should like to give that little girl a box of candy, Miss Page," observed Frank, "and then ask her for a kiss myself."

For an hour Alice kept both the young men interested in her anecdotes of school-teaching, and then her brother said:

"Come, sis, you must sing some, or no box to-night!"

"Well," she replied, smiling, "what shall it be? a few gems from Moody and Sankey, or from 'Laurel

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Leaves'?" And then turning to Frank she added: "My brother just dotes on church music!"

"Alice," said her brother with mock sternness, "if you fib like that you know the penalty!"

"Do you play or sing, Mr. Nason?" she inquired, not heeding her brother.

"I do not know one note from another," he answered.

"Well, that is fortunate for me," she said; "I only sing a few old-fashioned ballads, and help out at church."

Then without further apology she went to the piano. "Come, Bertie," she said, "you must help me, and we will go through the College Songs." And go through them they did, beginning with "Clementine" and ending with "The Quilting Party."

"Now, sis," said her brother, "I want 'Old Folks at Home,' 'Annie Laurie,' 'Rock-a-bye,' and 'Ben Bolt,' and then I'll open the box."

It was a simple, old-fashioned home parlor entertainment, and no doubt most musical artists would have sneered at the programme, but Alice had a wonderfully sweet and sympathetic soprano voice, and as Frank sat watching the fitful flames play hide-and-seek in the open fire, and listened to those time-worn ballads, it seemed to him he had never heard singing

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quite so sweet. Much depends upon the time and place, and perhaps the romance of the open fire sparkling beneath the bank of evergreen, and making the roses come into the fair singer's cheeks, and warming the golden sheen of her hair, had much to do with it. When she came to "Ben Bolt," that old ditty that has all the pathos of our lost youth in it, there was a tiny quiver in her voice; and when she finished, had he been near he would have seen the glint of two unshed tears in her eyes, for the song carried her thoughts to where her mother was at rest.

It was the first time he had ever heard that song, and he never afterwards forgot it.

"Now, Bertie," said Alice coaxingly, after she had finished singing, "haven't I earned the box?"

It was an appeal that few men could resist, and certainly not Albert Page, and, true to his promise, he gave her the mysterious box. With excited fingers she untied the cords, tore off the wrapper, and as she lifted the cover she saw — a beautiful seal-skin sacque!

We will leave to the reader's imagination any and all the expressions that followed, for no pen can give them with all their girlish fervor, and when the exciting incident was over, it was time for retiring.

That evening, with its simple home enjoyments, sincere and wholesome, its bright open fire, the un-

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affected cordiality of brother and sister, and beyond all, the feeling that he was a welcome guest, made those few hours ones long to be remembered by Frank. To begin with, the cheerful fire was a novelty to him, and perhaps that added a touch of romance. Then Alice herself was a surprise. He had been captivated by her picture, but had half expected to find her a timid country girl, too shy to do aught but answer "yes" and "no," and look pleasant. Then her voice was also a surprise, and when he reached the seclusion of his room it haunted him. And more than that, so intently had its bird-like sweetness charmed him that it usurped all his thoughts. He had thanked her for the entertainment, of course, but now that he was alone, it seemed to him that his formal thanks had been too feeble an expression. "I don't wonder Bert adores her," he thought; "she is the most winsome, unaffected, and sweet little lady I ever met. If I were to remain in this house a week I should be madly in love with her myself."

He was a good deal so, as it was.

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CHAPTER XII

A COUNTRY SCHOOLMA'AM

"I HAVE directed our liveryman to send over his best nag and a cutter this morning," said Albert at breakfast the next day to his friend, "and you and Alice can take a sleigh-ride and see Sandgate snow-clad. I have some business matters to attend to."

Later, when he was alone with Alice, he added with a smile: "You need not feel obliged to wear your new sacque, sis; it's not very cold."

"Oh, you tease!" she replied, but the light in her eyes betrayed her feelings.

It was a delightful day for a sleigh-ride, for every bush and tree was covered with a white fleece of snow, and the morning sun added a tiny sparkle to every crystal. A thicket of spruce was changed to a grove of towering white cones and an alder swamp to a fantastic fairyland. It was all new to Frank, and as he drove away with that bright and vivacious girl for a companion it is needless to say he enjoyed it to the utmost.

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"I had no idea your town was so hemmed in by mountains," he said after they started and he had a chance to look around; "why, you are completely shut in, and such grand ones, too! They are more beautiful than the White Mountains and more graceful in shape."

"They are all of that," answered Alice, "and yet at times they make me feel as if I was shut in, away from all the world. We who see them every day forget their beauty and only feel their desolation, for a great tree-clad mountain is desolate in winter, I think. At least it is apt to reflect one's mood. I suppose you have travelled a great deal, Mr. Nason?"

"Not nearly as much as I ought to," he answered, "for the reason that I can't find any one I like to go with me. My mother and sisters go away to some watering-place every summer and stay there, and father sticks to business. I either dawdle around where the folks are summers, or stay in town and hate myself, if I can't find some one to go off on my yacht with me. The fact is, Miss Page," he added mournfully, "I have hard work to kill time. I can get a little party to run to Newport or Bar Harbor in the summer, and that is all. I should like to go to Florida or the West Indies in the winter, or to Labrador or Greenland summers, but I can't find company."

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Alice was silent for a moment, for the picture of a young man complaining because he had nothing to do but spend his time and money was new to her.

"You are to be pitied," she said at last, with a tinge of sarcasm, "but still, there are just a few who would envy you."

He made no reply, for he did not quite understand whether she meant to be sarcastic or not. They rode along in silence for a time, and then Alice pointed to a small square brown building just ahead, almost hid in bushes, and said:

"Do you see that magnificent structure we are coming to, and do you notice its grand columns and lofty dome? If you had been a country boy you would recollect seeing a picture of it in the spelling-book. Take a good look at it, for that is a temple of knowledge, and it is there I teach school!"

Frank was silent, for this time the sarcastic tone in her voice was more pronounced. When they reached it he stopped and said quietly, "Please hold the reins. I want to look into the room where you spend your days."

He took a good long look, and when he returned he said, "So that is what you call a temple, is it? And it was in there the little girl wanted to kiss you because you looked happy?" And then as they

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drove on he added, "Do you know, I've thought of that pretty little touch of feeling a dozen times since you told about it, and when I go home I shall send a box of candy to you and ask you to do me the favor of giving it to that little girl."

It was not what she expected he would say, and it rather pleased her.

Conversation is but an exchange of moods, and in spite of their inspiring surroundings, the moods of those two young people did not seem to appeal to each other. To Alice, whose constant life of self-denial had made her feel that the world was cold and selfish, his complaints seemed little short of sacrilege; and he felt he had made a mess of it somehow in his really honest desire to be sincere. But two people so placed must talk, whether they feel like it or not, and so these two tried hard to be sociable. He wisely allowed her to do the most talking, and was really interested in her humorous descriptions of school-teaching. When they were nearly home he said:

"You are not a bit like what I imagined a school-ma'am was like."

"Did you think I wore blue glasses and petted a black cat?" she asked laughingly.

"The glasses might be a protection to susceptible

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young men," he answered, "and for that reason I would advise you to wear them."

"Shall I get some to-morrow to wear while you are here?" she queried with a smile. "I will if you feel in danger."

"Would you do it if I admitted I was?" he replied, resolving to stand his ground, and looking squarely at her.

But that elusive young lady was not to be cornered.

"You remind me of a story Bert told once," she said, "about an Irishman who was called upon to plead guilty or not guilty to the charge of drunkenness. When asked afterwards how he pleaded he said: 'Bedad, I give the judge an equivocal answer.' 'And what was that?' said his friend. 'Begorra, whin the judge axed me was I guilty or not guilty, I answered, "Was yer grandfather a monkey?" And then he gave me sixty days.'"

"Well," replied Frank, "that is a good story, but it doesn't answer my question."

That afternoon when Alice was alone with her brother, he said: "Well, sis, how do you like my friend?"

"Oh, he means to be nice," she replied, "but he is a little thoughtless, and it would do him good to have to work for his living a year or two."

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Albert looked at his sister, while an amused smile spread over his face, and then said:

"If you weren't so abominably pretty you wouldn't be so fussy. Most young ladies would consider the good-looking and only son of a millionaire absolutely perfect at sight."

"But I don't," she replied, "and if you weren't the best brother in the world I'd box your ears! 'Abominably pretty!' The idea!"

The two days intervening before Sunday passed all too quickly for the three young people. One day they drove to a distant country town and had dinner, and that evening Alice, true to her sex, invited Frank to go with her to call upon her dearest girl friend. Just why she did this we will leave to any young lady to answer, if she will. The next day Albert invited a little party, and that evening they all met at the old mill pond and had a skating frolic. Secluded as it was, between wooded banks, it was just the place for that kind of fun, and the young men added romance to the scene by lighting a bonfire! When Sunday morning came they of course attended church, and Frank, as promised, found himself slyly stared at by all the people of Sandgate. He did not pay much attention to the sermon, but a good deal to a certain sweet soprano voice in the choir, and when after ser-

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vice Alice joined them, he boldly walked right away with her and left Albert chatting with a neighbor. It is certain that this proceeding did not displease her, for no wise young lady is averse to the assumed protectorship of a good-looking and well-dressed young man, especially when other girls are looking on.

On the way home she, of course, asked the usual question as to how he liked the sermon.

"I don't think I heard ten words of it," he replied; "I was kept busy counting how many I caught looking at me, and whenever the choir sang I forgot to count. Why was it they stared at me so much? Is a stranger here a walking curiosity?"

"In a way, yes," answered Alice; "they don't mean to be rude, but a new face at church is a curio. I'll wager that nine out of ten who were there this morning are at this moment discussing your looks and wondering who and what you are."

But all visits come to an end, and Frank, already more than half in love with the girl who had treated him in a rather cool though perfectly courteous way, realized that he would soon be not only out of sight, but out of mind, so far as Alice was concerned. In a way he had been spoiled by being sought after by managing mammas and over-anxious daughters, and was unprepared for the slightly indifferent reception

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he had met with from Alice. He had been attracted by her face the first time he saw her picture, and five days' association had not lessened the attraction.

A realization of her cool indifference tinged his feelings that evening just at dusk, where he had been left alone beside the freshly started parlor fire, and when the object of his thought happened in, he sat staring moodily at the flames. She drew a chair opposite, and seating herself, said pleasantly:

"Why so pensive, Mr. Nason? Has going to church made you feel repentant?"

"I don't feel the need of repentance except in one way," he answered, "and that you would not be interested in. If I am looking pensive," he continued, turning towards her, "it's because I'm going away to-morrow."

It was a step towards dangerous ground, and she realized it, but a little spice of daring coquetry impelled her to say:

"Tell me what you feel to repent of; I may be able to offer you some good advice."

He had turned toward the fire again, and sat shading his face with one hand, and slowly passing his fingers across his forehead. For a moment he waited, and then answered:

"To be candid, Miss Page, I'm growing ashamed

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of the useless life I lead, and it's that I feel to repent of. A few things your brother said to me three months ago were the beginning, and a remark you made the day we first went sleighing has served to increase that feeling. Ever since I left college I have led an aimless life, bored to death by *ennui*, and conscious that no one was made any happier by my existence. What Bert said to me, and your remark, have only served to make me realize it more fully."

They were both on risky ground now, and no one knew it better than Alice, but she did not lose her head.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Nason," she said pleasantly, "if any words of mine hurt you even a little. I have forgotten what they were, and wish you would. The visit which you and Bert are making me is a most delightful break in the monotony of my life, and I shall be very glad to see you again." And then rising she added, "If I hurt you, please say you forgive me, for I must go out and see to getting tea."

It was an adroit escape from a predicament, and she felt relieved. It must also be stated that her visitor had taken a long step upward in her estimation.

The last evening was passed much like the first, except that now the elusive Alice seemed to be transformed into a far more gracious hostess, and all her

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smiles and interest seemed to be lavished upon Frank instead of her brother. It was as if this occult little lady had come to feel a new and surprising curiosity in all that concerned the life and amusements of her visitor. With true feminine skill she plied him with all manner of questions, and affected the deepest interest in all he had to say. What were his sisters' amusements? Did they entertain much, play tennis, golf, or ride? Where did they usually go summers, and did he generally go with them? His own comings and goings, and where he had been and what he saw there, were also made a part of the grist he was encouraged to grind. She even professed a keen interest in his yacht, and listened patiently to a most elaborate description of that craft, although as a row-boat was the largest vessel she had ever set foot on, it is likely she did not gain a very clear idea of the "Gypsy."

"Your yacht has a very suggestive name," she said; "it makes one think of green woods and camp-fires. I should dearly love to take a sail in her. I have read so much about yachts and yachting that the idea of sailing along the shores in one's own floating house, as it were, has a fascination for me."

This expression of taste was so much in line with Frank's, and the idea of having this charming girl

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for a yachting companion so tempting, that his face glowed.

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure," he responded, "than to have you for a guest on my boat, Miss Page. I think it could be managed if I could only coax my mother and sisters to go, and you and your brother would join us. We would visit the Maine coast resorts and have no end of a good time."

"It's a delightful outing you suggest," she answered, "and I thank you very much; but I wouldn't think of coming if your family had to be coaxed to go, and then, it's not likely that Bert could find the time."

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way," he said, looking serious, "only mother and the girls are afraid of the water, that is all."

When conversation lagged Frank begged that she would sing for him, and suggested selections from Moody and Sankey; and despite her brother's sarcastic remark that it wasn't a revival meeting they were holding, she not only played and sang all those time-worn melodies, but a lot of others from older collections. When retiring-time came, Frank asked that she conclude with "Ben Bolt."

"I shall not need to recall that song to remind me of you," he said in a low voice as he spread it on the

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music rack in front of her, "but I shall always feel its mood when I think of you."

"Does that mean that you will think of me as sleeping 'in a corner obscure and alone' in some churchyard?" she responded archly.

"By no means," he said, "only I may perhaps have a little of the same mood at times that Ben Bolt had when he heard of the fate of his sweet Alice."

It was a pretty speech and Frank imagined she threw a little more than usual pathos into the song after it; but then, no doubt his imagination was biassed by his feelings.

When they stood on the platform the next morning awaiting the train, he said quietly:

"May I send you a few books and some new songs when I get home, Miss Page? I want to show you how much I have enjoyed this visit."

"It is very nice of you to say so," she replied, "and I shall be glad to be remembered, and hope you will visit us again."

When the train came in he rather hurriedly offered his hand and with a "Permit me to thank you again," as he raised his hat, turned away to gather up the satchels and so as not to be witness to her leave-taking from her brother.

It was a tactful act that was not lost upon her.

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CHAPTER XIII

SOUTHPORT ISLAND

In summer Southport Island, as yet untainted by the tide of outing travel, was a spot to inspire dreams, poetry, and canvases covered with ocean lore. Its many coves and inlets where the tides ebbed and flowed among the weed-covered rocks; its bold cliffs, sea washed, and above which the white gulls and fish-hawks circled; the deep thickets of spruce through which the ocean winds murmured, and where great beds of ferns and clusters of red bunch-berries grew, were one and all left undisturbed, week in, week out.

At the Cape, where Uncle Terry, Aunt Lissy, and Telly lived their simple home life, and Bascom, the storekeeper and postmaster, talked unceasingly when he could find a listener, and Deacon Oaks wondered why "the grace o' God hadn't freed the land from stuns," no one ever came to disturb its quietude. Every morning Uncle Terry, often accompanied by Telly in a calico dress and sunbonnet, rowed out to

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pull his lobster traps, and after dinner harnessed and drove to the head of the island to meet the mail boat, then at eventide, after lighting his pipe and the lighthouse lamp at about the same time, generally strolled over to Bascomb's to have a chat, while Telly made a call on the "Widder Leach," a misanthropic but pious protegée of hers, and Aunt Lissy read the "Boston Journal." Once in about three weeks, according to weather, the monotony of the village was disturbed by the arrival of the small schooner owned jointly by Uncle Terry, Oaks, and Bascom, and which plied between the Cape and Boston. Once in two weeks services were held as usual in the little brown church, and as often the lighthouse tender called and left coal and oil for Uncle Terry. Regularly on Thursday evenings the few piously inclined, led by Deacon Oaks, gathered in the church to sing hymns they repeated fifty-two times each year, listen to a prayer by Oaks, that seldom varied in a single sentence, and heard Auntie Leach thank the Lord for his "many mercies," though what they were in her case it would be hard to tell, unless being permitted to live alone and work hard to live at all was a mercy. The scattered islanders and the handful whose dwellings comprised the Cape worked hard, lived frugally, and were unconscious that all around them

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was a rocky shore whose cliffs and inlets and beaches were so many poems of picturesque and charming scenery.

This was Southport in summer, but in winter when the little harbor at the Cape was ice-bound, the winding road to the head of the island buried beneath drifts, and the people often for weeks at a time absolutely cut off from communication with the rest of the world, it was a place cheerless in its desolation. Like so many woodchucks then, the residents kept within doors, or only stirred out to cut wood, fodder the stock, and shovel paths so that the children could go to school. The days were short and the evenings long, and to get together and spend hours in labored conversation the only pastime. It was one of those long evenings, and when Aunt Lissy and Telly were at a neighbor's, and Uncle Terry, left to himself, was reading every line, including the advertisements, in the last "Boston Journal," that the following met his eye:

WANTED. — Information that will lead to the discovery of an heir to the estate of one Eric Peterson, a land-owner and shipbuilder of Stockholm, Sweden, whose son, with his wife, child, and crew, were known to have been wrecked on the coast of Maine, in March, 187–. Nothing has ever been heard of said Peterson or his wife, but the child may have been saved.

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Any one having information that will lead to the discovery of this child will be amply rewarded by communicating with

NICHOLAS FRYE,
—, PEMBERTON SQUARE, BOSTON. *Attorney at Law.*

"Wal, I'll be everlastin'ly gol darned!" he exclaimed after he had read it for the third time. "If this don't beat all natur, I'm a goat."

It was fortunate he was alone, for it gave him time to think the matter over, and after half an hour of astonishment he decided to say nothing to his wife or Telly.

"I'll jis' breathe easy an' sag up," he said to himself, "same as though I was crossin' thin ice, an' if nothin' comes on't nobody'll be the worse for worryin'."

Then he cut the slip out and hid it in his black leather wallet, and then wisely cut out the entire page and burned it.

"Wimmin are sich curis creeters they'd be sure to want to know what I'd cut out o' that page," he said to himself, "an' never rest till I told 'em."

When Aunt Lissy and Telly came home he was as composed as a rock and sat quietly puffing his pipe, with his feet on top of a chair and pointing towards the fire.

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"Were you lonesome, father?" asked Telly, who usually led conversation in the Terry home. "We stopped at Bascom's, and you know he never stops talking."

"He's worse'n burdock burs ter git away from," answered Uncle Terry, "an' ye can't be perlite ter him unless ye want t' spend the rest o' yer life listenin'. His tongue allus seemed ter be hung in the middle an' wag both ways. I wasn't lonesome," he continued, rising and adding a few sticks to the fire, as the two women laid aside their wraps and drew chairs up; "I've read the paper purty well through an' had a spell o' livin' over by-gones," and then, turning to Telly and smiling, he added: "I got thinkin' o' the day ye came ashore, an' mother she got that excited she sot the box ye was in on the stove an' then put more wood in. It's a wonder she didn't put ye in the stove instead o' the wood!"

As this joke was not new to the listeners, no notice was taken of it, and the three lapsed into silence.

Outside the steady boom of the surf beating on the rocks came with monotonous regularity, and inside the clock ticked. For a long time Uncle Terry sat and smoked on in silence, resuming, perhaps, his by-gones, and then said: "By the way, Telly, what's become o' them trinkets o' yourn ye had on that day?

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It's been so long now, 'most twenty years, I 'bout forgot 'em. I s'pose ye hain't lost 'em, hev ye?"

"Why, no, father," she answered, a little surprised. "I hope not. They are all in the box in my bureau, and no one ever disturbs them."

"Ye wouldn't mind fetchin' 'em now, would ye, Telly?" he continued after drawing a long whiff of smoke and slowly emitting it in rings. "It's been so many years, an' since I got thinkin' 'bout it I'd like to take a look at 'em, jest to remind me o' that fortunate day ye came to us."

The girl arose, and going upstairs, returned with a small tin box shaped like a trunk, and drawing the table up in front of Uncle Terry, set the box down upon it. It is likely that its contents were so many links that bound the two together, for as he opened it she perched herself on the arm of his chair, and leaning against his shoulder, passed one arm caressingly around his neck and watched him take out the contents.

First came a soft, fleecy baby blanket, then two little garments, once whitest muslin but now yellow with age, and then another smaller one of flannel. Pinned to this were two tiny shoes of knitted wool. In the bottom of the box was a small wooden shoe, and though clumsy in comparison, yet evidently

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fashioned to fit a lady's foot. Tucked in this was a little box tied with faded ribbon, and in this were a locket and chain, two rings, and a scrap of paper. The writing on the paper, once hastily scrawled by a despairing mother's hand, had almost faded, and inside the locket were two faces, one a man's with strongly marked features, the other girlish with big eyes and hair in curls.

These were all the heritage of this waif of the sea who now, a fair girl with eyes and face like the woman's picture, was leaning on the shoulder of her foster-father, and they told a pathetic tale of life and death; of romance and mystery not yet unwoven, and a story not yet told.

How many times that orphan girl had imagined what that tale might be; how often before she had examined every one of those mute tokens; how many times gazed with moist eyes at the faces in the locket; and how, as the years bearing her onward toward maturity passed, had she hoped and waited, hoping ever that some word, some whisper from that far-off land of her birth might reach her! But none ever came, and now hope was dead.

And as she looked at those mute relics which told so little and yet so much of her history, while the old man who had been all that a kind father could be to

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her took them out one by one, she realized more than ever before what a debt of gratitude she owed to him. When he had looked them over and put them back in the exact order in which they had been packed, he closed the box, and taking the little hand that had been caressing his face in his own wrinkled and bony one, held it for a moment. When he released it the girl stooped, and pressing her lips to his weather-browned cheek, arose and resumed her seat. Had observant eyes watched her then, they would have noticed that hers remained closed for a few moments and that two tears glistened there.

"Wal, ye better put the box away now," said Uncle Terry at last. "I'll jest go out an' take a look off'n the pint and then it'll be time to turn in."

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CHAPTER XIV

A LEGALIZED PICKPOCKET

"I've got ter go ter Boston," said Uncle Terry to his wife a few days later. "Thar's some money due us that we ain't sartin we'll git. You an' Telly can tend the lights for a couple o' nights, can't ye? I won't be gone more'n that. Bascom's to take me up to the head, an' if the boat's runnin' I'll be all right."

This plan had cost Uncle Terry a good deal of diplomacy. Not only did he have to invent a reasonable excuse for going by exciting the fears of both Bascom and Oaks regarding money really due them, but he had to allay the curiosity of his wife and Telly as well. In a small village like the Cape every one's movements were well known to all and commented on, and no one was better aware of it than Uncle Terry. But go to Boston he must, and to do so right in the dead of winter, when to take such a trip was an unheard-of thing, and not excite a small tempest of curious gossip, taxed his Yankee wit.

At Bath he had a few hours' wait, and went to the

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bank and drew a sizable sum of money from his small savings.

"Lawyers are sech sharps, consarn 'em!" he said to himself, "I'd better go loaded. Most likely I'll come back skinned! I never did tackle a lawyer 'thout losin' my shirt."

When, after an all-night ride, during which he sat in the smoking-car with his pipe and thoughts for company, he arrived in Boston, he felt, as he would phrase it, like a cat in a strange garret. He had tried to fortify himself against the expected meeting with this Frye, who he felt sure would, like all his profession, make him pay dearly for any service. When he entered the rather untidy office of that legal light he was not surprised to find that its occupant much resembled a vulture.

"Well, sir, what can I do for you?" asked Frye, after his visitor had introduced himself.

"Wal," answered Uncle Terry, taking a seat and laying his hat on the floor beside him, "I've come on rather a curis errand;" and taking out the slip he had a few days before placed in his wallet, he handed it to Frye with the remark: "That's my errand."

Frye's face brightened.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Terry," he said, beginning to rub his hands together. "If you have any

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facts in your possession that will aid us in the search for an heir to this estate we shall be glad to pay you for them, provided they are facts. Now, sir, what is your story?"

Uncle Terry looked at the lawyer a moment before answering.

"I didn't come here to tell all I knew the fust go-off," he said. "I know all 'bout this shipwreck, an' a good deal more that'll consarn ye, but fust I want to know who is lookin' for the information, an' what's likely to cum on't."

It was Frye's turn to stare now.

"This man won't be any easy witness," he thought; and then he said: "That I am not at liberty to disclose until I know what facts you can establish, but rest assured that any information you may have, if it be proved of real value, will entitle you to an ample reward."

"I reckon ye don't quite ketch on ter my drift," replied Uncle Terry. "I didn't cum here lookin' fer pay, but to see that justice was sarved and them as had rights got thar dues."

"Well, sir," said Frye, in a suave voice, "we too are looking to see the ends of justice served, but you must understand that in a matter of this importance we must make no mistakes. An estate awaits a

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claimant, but that claimant must establish his or her identity beyond the shadow of a doubt, in order, as you must see, that justice may be done."

"Wal," replied Uncle Terry, stroking his chin with his thumb and finger while he deliberated, "I s'pose I may as well tell ye fust as last. I cum here for that purpose, an' all I want to fix is, if thar's nothin' in it ye'd keep it a secret and not raise any false hopes in the minds o' them as is near and dear to me."

"It's a lawyer's professional duty never to disclose any business confidence that a client may confide to him," answered Frye with dignity, "and in this matter I infer you wish to become my client. Am I right, Mr. Terry?"

"I didn't cum here exactly purposin' to hire ye," answered Uncle Terry; "I cum to find what's in the wind, an', if 'twas likely to 'mount to anything, to tell all I knew an' see that them as had rights got justice. As I told ye in the fust on't, I'm keeper o' the light at the end o' Southport Island, an' have been for thirty year.

"One night in March, just nineteen year ago comin' this spring, thar was a small bark got a-foul o' White Hoss Ledge right off'n the pint and stayed thar hard an' fast. I seen her soon as 'twas light, but thar

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was nothin' that could be done but build a fire an' stand an' watch the poor critters go down. Long toward noon I spied a bundle workin' in, an' when it struck I made fast to it with a boat hook an' found a baby inside an' alive. My wife an' I took care on't, and have been doing so ever since. It was a gal baby and she growed up into a young lady. 'Bout ten years ago we took out papers legally adoptin' her, an' so she's ourn. From a paper we found pinned to her clothes, we learned her name was Etelka Peterson, an' that her mother, an' we supposed her father, went down that day right in sight o' us. Thar was a locket round the child's neck, an' a couple o' rings in the box, an' we have kept 'em an' the papers an' all her baby clothes ever since. That's the hull story."

"How did this child live to get ashore?" asked Frye, keenly interested.

"That's the curis part," replied Uncle Terry; "she was put in a box an' tied 'tween two feather beds an' cum ashore dry as a duck."

Frye stroked his nose reflectively, stooping over as he did and watching his visitor with hawk-like eyes.

"A very well-told tale, Mr. Terry," he said at last. "A very well-told tale indeed! Of course you have retained all the articles you say were found on the child?"

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"Yes, we've kept 'em all, you may be sure," replied Uncle Terry.

"And why did you never make any official report of this wreck and of the facts you state?" asked Frye.

"I did at the time," answered Uncle Terry, "but nothin' cum on't. I guess my report is thar in Washington now, if it ain't lost."

"And do I understand you wish to retain me as your counsel in this matter, and lay claim to this estate, Mr. Terry?" continued Frye.

"Wal, I've told ye the facts," replied Uncle Terry, "an' if the gal's got money comin' I'd like to see her git it. What's goin' to be the cost o' doin' the business?"

"The matter of expense is hard to state in such a case as this," answered Frye cautiously. "The estate is a large one; there may be, and no doubt will be, other claimants; litigation may follow, and so the cost is an uncertain one. I shall be glad to act for you in this matter, and will do so if you retain me."

It is said that those who hesitate are lost, and at this critical moment Uncle Terry hesitated.

He did not like the looks of Frye. He suspected him to be what he was — a shrewd, smooth, plausible

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villain. Had he obeyed his first impulse he would have picked up his hat and left Frye to wash his hands with invisible soap, and laid his case before some other lawyer, but he hesitated. Frye, he knew, had the matter in his hands and might make the claim that his story was false and fight it with all the legal weapons Uncle Terry so much dreaded. In the end he decided to put the matter in Frye's hands and hope for the best.

"I shall want you to send me a detailed story of this wreck, sworn to by yourself and wife," said Frye, "also all the articles found on this child; and I will lay your affidavits before the attorneys for this estate, and report progress to you later on."

When Uncle Terry turned his face towards home his pocket was lighter by two hundred dollars. With most of us when we take an uncertain step, the farther we get from it the more sure we become that it was an unwise one, and it was so with Uncle Terry.

"I s'posed I'd git skinned," he muttered to himself after he was well on his way home, "an' I reckon I have! That dum thief, like all the rest o' lawyers, knows a farmer at sight, an' when he ketches one he takes his hay! He's taken mine fur sartin an' I begin to think I'm a consarned old fool, that don't

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know 'nuff to go in when it rains! How I'm goin' to git the wimmin to give up them trinkets, 'thout 'lowin' I've lost my senses, is one too many fur me!"

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CHAPTER XV

THE VALUE OF GOOD EXAMPLE

It has been well said that we grow to be like our nearest neighbors, and the effect of Albert Page's vigorous efforts to attain success was not lost upon his friend Frank.

After their Christmas visit to Sandgate Albert had applied himself diligently to the care of Mr. Nason's legal needs. This brought him into contact with other business men and the fact that John Nason employed him easily secured for him other clients. In two months he not only had Mr. Nason's affairs to look after, but all his remaining time was taken up by others'. He had spent several evenings at the Nasons' home, and found the family a much more agreeable one than Frank had led him to expect. Both that young man's sisters were bright and agreeable young ladies, and though a little affected, they treated him with charming courtesy and extended to him a cordial invitation to have his sister make them a visit. A good-looking, well-educated, and well-

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behaved young man, no matter if he is poor, will find favor wherever he goes, and Albert was no exception.

Since the day he had shaken his fist at the closed door of Mr. Frye's law office he had met that hawk-nosed lawyer twice and received only a chilling bow. The memory of that contemptible contract he had tacitly allowed Frye to consider as made brought a blush to his face every time he thought of it, but he kept his own counsel. Once or twice he had been on the point of telling Frank the whole story, but had refrained, feeling it would do no good, and might cause trouble. He was a thorough believer in the truism that if you give a calf rope enough, he will hang himself, and a rascal time, he will get caught.

In his intimate relations with John Nason he saw enough to satisfy himself that Frye's insinuation against that busy man's character was entirely false. Mr. Nason seldom spent an evening away from his home, and when he did, it was to attend the theatre with his family.

After their visit to Sandgate Frank and himself naturally drifted into more intimate relations, and a day seldom passed that Frank did not step into his office for a chat.

"Don't mind me, Bert," that uneasy man would say when he saw that Page was busy, "and if you

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don't want me to talk any time, tell me to shut up. I shan't feel offended. The fact is, I don't know what to do with myself. If it were only summer I'd go off on the 'Gypsy,' even if I had to go alone."

One evening at the club he made Albert a rather surprising proposition. Albert, who seldom entered into any card games, and only occasionally played pool or billiards, was in the reading-room as usual enjoying a cigar and the evening "Journal" when Frank drew up a chair and sat down. They were alone, and as Page laid his paper aside to chat with Frank, whom he really liked very much, despite the fact that that young man bothered him a good deal, Frank said:

"Do you know, I am getting absolutely tired and sick of doing nothing. Ever since I left college I've been an idler, and I can't say I'm enjoying it. I arise in the morning and wonder how I can manage to get through the day. I read the papers, go down to the store, up to the club, down to your office, back to the club to lunch, and maybe play pool for an hour or two with some poor devil as lonesome as I am, or go to the matinee, and in the evening only do I begin to enjoy myself a little. I am beginning to realize that a life of idleness is a beastly bore, and I am sick

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of it. I want you to let me come into your office and study law; will you?"

Albert looked at him a moment, while an amused smile crept over his face.

"Do you know what that means?" he responded at last. "Do you know that to read law means two years, perhaps, of close application and perseverance? In my case I had the spur of necessity to urge me on and even with that stimulus it was a dry, hard grind. With you, who have all the money you need and are likely to, it will be much worse. I respect your feeling and I admire your determination very much, and, of course, do not wish to discourage you. You are more than welcome to my office and law books, and I will gladly help you all I can," and then after a moment's reflection he added, "I believe it's a wise step, and I'll be very glad to have you with me. You can help me out in a good many ways also that will advance you even faster than steady reading."

He was surprised at the look of pleasure that came into Frank's face.

"I had half expected you would try to discourage me," said he, "and it's very kind of you to promise to help me."

"Why shouldn't I?" answered Page. "I owe you a good deal more than that, my dear boy, and when

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you have been admitted we will go into a partnership if you want to do it."

"Here's my hand on it," said Frank, rising, "and I mean it, too, and if you will have patience with me I'll stick it out or own up I'm no good in this world." He seemed overjoyed and for two hours they sat and talked it over. "When may I begin?" he said finally. "I want to go at it right away."

"To-morrow morning at nine o'clock sharp," replied Albert, smiling, "and I warn you I shall keep you grinding eight full hours, six days a week, and no let-up until July first. But tell me, when did this sensible and eminently laudable idea enter your head?"

"Well, to be exact, it came to me in the parlor of your house in Sandgate, just at dark, the last evening I was there, and a remark your sister made to me was the cause of it."

A droll smile crept over Albert's face at this frank admission, but he made no reply, and as he scanned his friend's face, now turned slightly away from him, and recalled that last evening at home, and how Alice had so persistently devoted herself to the entertainment of this young man, a revelation came to him.

"So it's that heart-breaker's blue eyes that have begun to work mischief in Frank's feelings, is it?"

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he said to himself, after he had left the club, and he almost laughed aloud at the thought. "Sis has some rather pronounced ideas about idleness, and maybe she has read my young friend a lesson in a few words. She is capable of it!"

When Frank, true to his promise, came to the office next morning, Albert set him to work and made sure to give him all possible encouragement.

"I think far more of you, Frank," he said earnestly, "for this good resolve, and when you get fairly into it and begin to take an interest you will be glad you took hold. I believe every one in this world is happier and healthier for having an occupation, and certainly you will be."

It must be recorded that Frank showed a persevering spirit as the weeks went by, and he became, as Page predicted, thoroughly interested, and an earnest student. In a way, too, he was a help to Albert, for he could call on him any time to find some references or some decision bearing on a case in hand. It was soon after Frank's new departure in life that Alice received a letter from her brother, and among other things he wrote:

"What was it you said to Frank the last evening of our visit at home? He has decided to study law in my office and admits his sensible resolution to do

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so was the result of a remark you made then. Knowing what a fine vein of sarcasm you are blessed with (as well as bewitching ways), I am curious to know what sort of an arrow you drew from your quiver that evening."

But Albert was not adroit enough to obtain a confession from his keen-witted sister, and thereby be enabled to joke her a little about it, for she never replied to his question.

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CHAPTER XVI

SWEET ALICE

"Oh, don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?
Sweet Alice whose hair was so brown,
Who wept with delight when you gave her a smile,
And trembled with fear at your frown?"

Old Song.

EVERY person we meet in life makes an impression on us, varying from the faintest shadow that soon vanishes to a vivid one that lasts as long as memory.

Alice Page's first impression of Frank Nason did not do him justice. She thought him a big, good-natured, polite boy, rather conscious that he was likely to be sought after, and disposed to sulk if he wasn't. His plea for sympathy on the score that his life of idleness was a bore, which he made the day they went sleighing, only provoked her derision, and as she was disposed to judge all men by the standard of her self-reliant brother, he came near awakening contempt on her part. It was not until the last evening of his visit that she discovered her mistake and

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ALICE

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realized that he had more depth of character than she had thought. It is likely the keen enjoyment which he seemed to feel when she sang for him had weight, for we are prone to like those who like us, and it was natural also that she should feel a little gratitude for what he had done for her brother.

Her life, hidden away as she was in a by-way corner of a country town, and seeing no one all the week except her small band of pupils, gave her plenty of time for thought, and there was no young man in the village whose company she would tolerate if she could help it. Once a week, usually on Saturday, she received a letter from her brother, and that, together with the mild excitement of Sunday church-going, was all that broke the monotony of her life.

A week after the Christmas visit she received a package containing a new book, three of the latest popular songs, and a box of candy, and pinned to the candy Frank Nason's card, on the back of which was written: "For the girl who wanted to kiss her teacher."

She wrote a polite note of thanks, and then, feeling that she would soon be forgotten by him, and not caring much whether she was or not, settled down to the unvarying round of her daily life. It was mid-winter, and two weeks after her brother wrote that Frank had begun studying law in his office, when she re-

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ceived a letter from that young man that surprised her. He wrote:

MY DEAR MISS PAGE: I trust you will pardon me for intruding myself upon you, but I wish you to know that a few pointed words spoken by you while I was enjoying your hospitality have not been forgotten, and have influenced me to make an effort to be something better than an idler in the world. Your brother kindly consented to let me read law in his office, and I am now hard at it. I do not imagine this will interest you, but I felt that you had scant respect for useless people, and as you could rightly so regard me, I wanted you to know that I am capable of rising above my aimless life.

I have recalled so many times all the little incidents of my visit to your home, and lived over those evenings graced by your presence, and lit by a cheerful fire, time and again. Do not think me insincere when I assure you they were the most delightful ones I ever passed. If you find time to write a line to one who is now a worker in the hive instead of a drone, it will be gratefully received by me.

To a girl with Alice Page's sympathetic nature and tender feelings, words like these made her feel she was what she most enjoyed being — an inspiration and help to others. In this respect Frank Nason had read her better than she had read him, or else some fortunate intuition had led him aright. She answered the letter at once, thanking him for his flattering words, but forbidding him to use any more of them.

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"I do not like flattery," she wrote, "because no one ever can feel quite sure it is sincere. I will answer all your letters if you will promise not to tell Bert we are corresponding. Not that I am ashamed of it by any means, but he is inclined to tease me and I love him so dearly I can't bear to have him do so. The little girl you sent the candy to was both astonished and grateful. I did not tell her who sent it, for the fact would have been all over town in a week if I had, and I do not like to be gossiped about. I merely told her a good fairy had sent it, which was better."

Once a week thereafter Alice received a long letter from Frank and as regularly answered it. It is needless to say that she soon began to anticipate them and that they added much to her monotonous life. Frank wisely refrained from any expression of love, though Alice felt sure he was likely to make such expression in person if ever he had an opportunity to do so. No woman, much less a keenly sensitive young woman like her, is ever long in doubt as to a man's feelings, and Alice Page, whose heart had never felt a stronger emotion than love for her brother, knew the moment she read her admirer's first letter that its well-considered words were really inspired by Cupid. More than that, she felt sure that his commendable efforts to become a useful professional man, instead

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of a badly bored idler, were due to the hope that the effort would find favor in her eyes. In all these surmises it is needless to say her feminine intuition was quite correct.

That her brother also surmised the truth is quite likely, though he wisely kept these thoughts to himself for good and sufficient reasons.

"Frank is getting along nicely," he wrote Alice, in the early spring; "I believe he has the making of a capable lawyer in him. He grinds away harder than I ever did when reading law, and has never yet complained of how dry and dull it all is. He is a big, warm-hearted fellow, too, and I am growing more fond of him every day. He is more devoted to me than a brother, and we have made a lot of plans for a month's outing on the 'Gypsy' this coming summer. I like his family very much, and Mrs. Nason and both her daughters have invited me to bring you down when your school closes to make them a visit. I think I shall run up in June, and stay over Sunday, and bring Frank with me. I imagine he would like to come, for once in a while I overhear him humming 'Ben Bolt.'"

"A very nicely worded little plot; but don't you imagine, my dear Bert, I do not see through it!" was the mental comment of Alice when she read the letter.

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"The young gentleman has bravely set to work to become a man instead of a cipher; my brother likes him; he whistles 'Ben Bolt;' my brother is to bring him up here again; I am expected to fall in love with Mr. Cipher that was, and help him spend his money, and I am to be barely tolerated by mamma and both sisters! A most charming plot, surely, but it takes two to make a bargain. I think I know just the sort of people mamma and sisters are. He told me she read him a lecture every time he danced twice with a poor girl, and now I am expected to walk into the same trap, and cringe to her ladyship, for the sin of being poor. I guess not! I'll teach school till I die first, and he can think of me as having a 'slab of granite so gray' to keep me in place."

But this diplomatic "Sweet Alice" wrote to her brother: "I am delighted that you are coming up, for I am so lonesome, and the weeks drag so hard! Bring your friend up, by all means, and I'll sing 'Ben Bolt' until he hates the name of Sweet Alice. The country will be looking finely then, and he can go over to the cemetery, and select the corner I am to occupy. Pardon the joke, and don't tell him I uttered it."

To Frank she wrote: "Be sure to come up with Bert. I will sing all the old songs, and the new ones

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you have sent me, as well. If you come up on a Thursday you may visit my school Friday afternoon, if you will behave, and then you can see the girl you sent the candy to. She wears a calico pinafore, and comes to school barefooted."

Consistency, thy name is woman!

From all this it may be inferred that Alice was just a little coquettish, and that verdict is no doubt true. Like all her charming sex who are blessed with youth and beauty, she was perfectly conscious of it, and quite willing to exert its magic power on a susceptible young man with dark curly hair and earnest brown eyes. Neither was she impervious to the fact that this said young man was a possible heir to plenty of money. She never had much lavished on her, and, while not having suffered for the necessaries of life, she had had to deny herself all luxuries, and, most vexatious denial of all, a new gown and hat many times when she needed them. Her tactful reply to her brother's letter, coupled with his own sincere affection for her, brought her a response by return mail in the form of a check for one hundred dollars, with explicit orders to spend every cent of it before he came.

Whether she did or not we will leave to the imagination of all young ladies so situated.

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CHAPTER XVII

A BY-WAY SCHOOLHOUSE

SANDGATE was just budding forth in a new suit of green, the meadows dotted with white and yellow daisies, and here and there a bunch of tiger lilies waved in the breeze, when one Friday afternoon the teacher at the north district school heard a knock.

The class in reading, then in evidence, were halted in their sing-song of concert utterance and Alice Page opened the door to find two stalwart young men standing there. With a quick impulse of propriety she stepped out and closed the door behind her, only to find herself clasped in a big brother's arms and to receive a smack that was heard by every pupil in the little schoolroom. With a very red face she freed herself and then presented a small hand to the other young man with the remark:

"I think you are both just as mean as you can be to surprise me in this way!"

Her eyes told a different tale, however, and when explanations were duly made, the two visitors were

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invited inside and given seats. The class in reading was then dismissed and that in spelling called to what was now seemingly to them an unexpected misery. A bombshell, or a ghost at the window, would not have produced any more consternation than those two strange visitors. This class, that one by one filed up in front of the teacher's desk, and ranged themselves in line, stood trembling, and the boy at the head, to whom was put the first word, was unable to utter a sound. The next one spelled it wrong, and it was tried by two others and finally spelled right by a girl who could hardly do better than whisper it. She was told to go to the head, and after that the rest did better. The search for knowledge in that school had received a set-back, however, for that day, and Alice decided to do the wisest thing and dismiss her band of pupils without delay. When the room was cleared of them she turned to her two callers and said with mock seriousness: "The first class in deportment will now define propriety."

"Propriety is — is — Propriety," replied her brother, "consists in two young men surprising one small and very saucy schoolma'am and letting a lot of imprisoned boys and girls escape to the woods and enjoy an extra hour of freedom."

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"Not right," said Alice severely; "the next pupil will now answer."

"Propriety," answered Frank, "consists in two young men escaping from the city and relieving one tired school-teacher from her duty and permitting her to go and gather flowers if she will. But which was the girl you told the fairy tale to, Miss Page?" he added, as Alice began putting her books away.

"The only one in the spelling-class you two bold bad men didn't scare half out of her wits," she answered.

Frank walked about the room, peering curiously at its rather primitive fittings. Around three sides extended a breast-high shelf, carved and cut by many a jack-knife, and beneath it a narrower one where books and slates were stowed. In front were rows of backless benches for seats, and in the centre of the room an open stove shaped like a fireplace. Around this were three long, low seats with backs, and on the sides where the door was, a desk stood on a low platform. Back of this a large blackboard formed part of the wall, one end covered by the multiplication tables. No part of the room was plastered, and overhead the bare brown stringers held extra benches kept there for use on examination days.

"So this is what you call a temple of learning," he

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remarked, as he surveyed the barn-like room; "it is a curiosity to me, and the first time I was ever in an old-time country schoolhouse. I should like to peep through one of the knot-holes some day, and watch the performances, and hear a scared boy speak a piece."

"You had better not try it," answered Alice, "unless you want two or three farmers to swoop down on you, armed with scythes, and demanding to know what you are doing there."

When she had locked the schoolhouse door they got into the carriage the two young men had come in, and left the forlorn little temple to the solitude of the trees and bushes that almost hid it from sight.

"I will stop in the village," said Albert, as they drove away, "and leave you two to go home or take a ride, as suits you best; only mind, be home by tea-time, for I shall be hungry."

There is no time when a drive along wooded country roads is more charming than when the trees are fast growing green, and the meadows spangled with daisies and buttercups.

"Let's go around by the mill-pond," said Alice, after leaving her brother in the village; "that's where we went skating last Christmas, and the road to it

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follows the brook up a mile. We may find a few lilies in the pond."

The brook beside which they were soon walking the horse was a charming bit of scenery as it came leaping over mossy ledges, laughing, chattering, and filling the pools with foam flecks, and the old mill, with its great wheel dripping and clattering, and the mill itself, proved even a greater curiosity to Frank than the schoolhouse. He hitched the horse, and helping his fair companion to alight, the two went inside the mill and watched the rumbling wheels. Alice introduced her escort to the miller, and after they had been shown the mysteries of grinding he invited them out to the pond, and after bailing the old leaky boat so it was usable, the two visitors started after the lilies.

"Mind you don't tip me over," said Alice. "I can't swim."

"If I do I'll rescue you or drown with you," he answered gallantly. What silly nothings these two young people uttered as they made the circuit of that long wood-bordered mill-pond need not be recorded. One at least was just tasting the first sweet illusion of love, and the glassy surface of the water that reflected the trees bending over it, the bunches of water flag growing here and there, and the scattered patches of broad lily pads with now and then a white

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blossom, made a most picturesque background for the girl who sat in the stern. Her piquant face, shaded by a broad sun-hat, was fairer to his eyes than any of the lilies she plucked, and as she drew one sleeve up a little to reach for them, the round arm and dimpled hand she thrust into the water looked tempting enough to kiss. The miller had shut the gate and gone home when they returned to the mill, and when Alice, with both her wet hands full of lilies, was helped into the carriage, Frank said: "I am sorry that dusty old miller has gone. I wanted to give him five dollars for his kindness."

"He would think you insane if you did," answered Alice.

"Many a man has lost his wits with less provocation," replied Frank pointedly, "and I feel indebted to him for his help to one of the most charming hours I ever passed."

"That is all right," responded Alice; "he has known me ever since I was a little tot in short dresses and rode to mill with father. He would do more for me than bail his boat out."

"Do you know," remarked Frank, when they had left the mill behind and were driving through a bit of woods, "that I have anticipated this visit for weeks? I know scarcely anything about the country

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and it is all a revelation to me. I've seen pictures of old mills and ponds covered with lilies, but no painter can ever put the reality on canvas. Why, that great wheel covered with moss and churning away all day, so steadily, with a willow bending over it, is a poem in itself!"

"The mill was built over a hundred years ago," observed Alice, "and has been grinding away ever since. I love to visit it, for it takes me back to childhood and," she added a little sadly, "it makes me live over the happiest days of my life, when father used to take me with him everywhere he went."

"'But the mill will never grind with the water that has passed,'" quoted Frank, "and 'the tender grace of a day that is dead will never come back to me.' I wish I had been country born. I think I've missed countless pages of pleasant memories. Do you know," he added, turning to his companion, "I am rapidly falling in love with the country and — and its pretty sights?"

It was in his heart to say "you" as he saw the half-pathetic expression on his companion's face and noted the sad droop of her sweet mouth, but his courage failed him.

He was enough in love with her already to begin to feel afraid of her. "I must bide my time," he

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thought; "she is not to be won easily, and a word too soon may spoil all."

"Whose idea was it to pounce upon me that way at school?" exclaimed Alice suddenly, throwing off her retrospective mood and smiling again. "Was it yours or Bert's?"

"I confess I did it with my little hatchet," answered Frank; "I coaxed Bert to do it. We had to take the train at five o'clock in the morning and have coffee and rolls at the station for breakfast and pie and sandwiches for dinner."

"And all to surprise one poor little schoolma'am and break up her school," put in Alice; "was it worth all that annoyance?"

"Up to the present moment," answered Frank, "I must honestly say it was. This drive and the mill I consider cheap at any price."

"I don't mean this part of the surprise," said Alice, blushing a little at his open admiration, "and you know it." And then in self-defence she added, "What has become of the 'Gypsy'? Bert writes me that you two are planning trips in her already."

"She is still in winter quarters," answered Frank. "I've been too busy studying law to do more than think of her. I've reformed, you know."

Alice made no reply. The memory of what he had

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so evidently wished her to infer regarding his reasons for this new departure came to her in an instant and brought a little wonderment as to the possible outcome of it. Turn which way she would, and propose what topic she might, he seemed bound to use it as a vehicle of his undisguised admiration. She had wished to consider him as a friend, because he had been a friend to her adored brother when that brother needed one, and while she had written him a dozen chatty letters which might be printed for all the privacy they contained, she had studiously refrained from allowing him to infer, even, that she had any special interest in his actions. That he came to woo her, he was plainly allowing her to infer by every word and look, and she had feminine wit enough to see that it was earnest wooing, and not the simulated article usually designated as gallantry.

"I must avoid giving him opportunities," she said to herself, "or he will make some rash declaration and spoil our pleasant acquaintance."

When they arrived home Albert was on the piazza and Aunt Susan had supper waiting. The table was set with blue ware of a very old and quaint pattern, and when Alice had filled a bowl with lilies for a centrepiece they gathered around and "passed things"

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in true country fashion. The evening was unusually warm for June, and after the two young men had smoked and chatted for half an hour, Alice appeared dressed in spotless white, with a half-open lily in her hair and another at her throat. The moon, which was nearing its full, shone through the open spaces of the vine-clad porch and added an ethereal touch to the sylph-like picture she presented, and one that was certainly not lost upon Frank at least.

"Well," she remarked cheerfully, as she seated herself near her brother, "my time is yours, and what can I do to entertain you?"

"I had planned to take Frank to a trout brook to-morrow morning," responded Albert, "and in the afternoon you and he can hunt for mill-ponds and grottoes if you like, or gather laurel."

"And leave me alone all the forenoon!" put in Alice. "No, thank you. I'm shut up for five days and you can't get rid of me so easily. Why can't I go too?"

"I'm agreeable," replied her brother, "only a trout brook is not nice walking for a lady."

"I'm aware of that," she responded, "and you two can go fishing and I'll hunt for laurel in the meantime. We can take a basket of lunch with us and make a day of it in the woods." Then, as a possible

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contingency presented itself to her, she added, "Why not let me invite my friend, Abby Miles, to go for company? She and I can pick laurel, and when you have caught all the harmless little trout you want, we can meet where we leave the wagon and have a picnic."

"That suits me," said her brother, and without waiting for further discussion this diplomatic fairy in white arose and remarked, "I'll get a shawl, and then I'll trouble you, Mr. Nason, to escort me over to Abby's. It's only a few rods, and I want you to meet her. She's ever so nice."

From this it may be inferred that our "Sweet Alice" had resolved to protect herself against any romantic *tête-à-têtes* in the woods with a certain well-intentioned but presuming young man who might desire to play Romeo.

This was not quite to his taste, but he had the good sense not to show it, and all the next day he divided his attentions impartially between the two young ladies. The plan as mapped by Alice was carried out to the letter, and when the two young men joined the girls at noon they found a broad flat rock in the woods had been covered with a tablecloth and spread with a tempting meal. The girls had gathered great bunches of that beautiful flower pink laurel, and a

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cluster of it decked the table. After dinner our imperious Alice insisted that they visit the mill-pond once more, and when they returned at night, with two baskets of trout, and laurel and pond lilies enough to stock a flower stand, the day was voted an eminent success.

Frank made one error, however, for just before they left the mill he slipped away unobserved, and finding the miller, put a bit of paper into his hand with the remark, "Keep this to pay for the boat," and left him hurriedly. When the old man made examination he found he had a five-dollar bill. To surprises of this kind he was not accustomed, and before noon the next day there wasn't a man, woman, or child in Sandgate who had not heard of it.

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CHAPTER XVIII

VILLAGE GOSSIP

"What care I what the world may say,
So long as I have my way to-day? —
For this dear old world,
This queer old world,
With tongue like sands of the sea,
Is never so gay
As when wagging away,
And talking of you and of me."

THAT evening Frank begged for music, and Alice sung for two long hours. At least they might have seemed long to any but an enraptured young man who had for the entire day been kept from uttering one of the many love-lorn words that filled his heart. Albert, who had been informed by Alice that if he deserted her for a single moment that evening or the next he need never bring his friend there again, sat outside on the porch and close by the window, smoking incessantly and smiling to himself at the clever tactics of his charming but coy sister. When

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the concert was ended he observed, "If there's one song in the house that you have not sung, Alice, I wish you would sing it. I hate to have you omit any."

"I have only sung what I was asked to," she replied; "is not that so, Mr. Nason?"

"That is true," replied he boldly, "and you have not sung one that I wouldn't enjoy hearing again to-night."

"Oh, I have enjoyed them all," said Albert, "only I thought you might have missed one, and as Frank remarked coming home that he was hungry for music, I wanted him satisfied."

The next day, as usual, they attended church, only this time all three walked back together, although Albert felt that he was one too many, and all the afternoon and evening it was the same. But Alice was graciousness personified. All her jokes and smiles and all her conversation were lavished upon Frank. It may be that she wished to make amends for the opportunities she knew he was anxious to obtain but could not, for the most charming of women have a little of the feline instinct in their nature, and whether there is any response to a man's wooing in their hearts or not, they love to enjoy their power. Several times Frank, who intuitively felt she did not

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wish to be left alone with him, started to ask her to take a walk that Sunday evening, but each time his discretion prevailed. "If she is willing to listen to any love-making, she has tact enough to give me a chance," he thought, "and unless she is, I'd better keep still." Which would show he had at least a faint inkling of woman's ways. The evening was one to tempt Cupid, for the moonlight fell checkered through the half-naked elms along the roadway, and where here and there a group of maples stood was a bit of shadow. The whippoorwills had just returned to Sandgate, and over the meadows scattered fireflies twinkled. The houses along the way to the village were wide apart and the evening air just right for a loitering walk. To Frank, anxious to say a few words that would further his hopes in the direction of this bewitching girl, it seemed a waste of good time not to take advantage of the evening. It was almost past, and the lights in the houses across the valley had long since vanished when he obtained a little consolation.

The charm of the evening had stilled conversation and no one had spoken for a long time when he said, rather disconsolately, "My anticipated visit is almost over. May I ask you to go in and sing just one song for me, Miss Page?"

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"With pleasure," she responded in her sweetest tone, "what shall it be?"

"I will leave that to your selection," he replied.

Without a word she led the way in and began searching among the pile of music on the piano, and finding what she wanted, opened and spread the music on the rack.

It was "Ben Bolt."

She sang it in a minor key, and as the opening words,

"Oh, don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt,"

floated out on the still evening air, they seemed to him fraught with a new meaning and that a veritable sweet Alice was bidding him, another Ben Bolt, not to forget her. When the last note had faded into the night air, she turned her now serious eyes toward him and said:

"Did I guess right?"

How much he longed to take that fair girl in his arms then and there and ask her to be his own sweet Alice need not be specified. For a moment her tender blue eyes met his brown ones, and then they fell.

"I am glad I did not make a mistake," she said softly.

"I thank you," he almost whispered, "and there

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won't be many waking moments in my future when I shall not think of — sweet Alice!"

It was not much of a love scene, but to him it seemed a wide-open door of hope, and when many miles separated them, and for days, weeks, and months afterward, even when doing his best to crowd dull law reports into his brain, the one tender glance she gave him and the tones of her voice came back with unfailing accuracy.

There is no spot where every one knows everybody else's business and discusses it that is quite equal in this way to a small country town, and Sandgate was no exception. The first visit of Frank Nason to the Page home, his sleigh-rides with Alice, and his appearance at church had caused no end of comment. It was known that he had been a classmate of Albert's and came from Boston, and later Aunt Susan vouchsafed the information that she "guessed he came from one o' the first families and that he appeared right well behaved."

It was all she really did know, for both Alice and her brother were considerate of her failings and knew it was not safe to discuss their visitor in her presence. The tempest of gossip had not more than half quieted down when it received a regular boom from his second coming. The pupils of the north end district school

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spread the news of their teacher's unexpected callers; that they heard her kiss one, and which one they did not know; and that she had dismissed school at once and gone on with the stranger. Old Amos Curtis, the miller, told of their visit, and, wonder upon wonder, how the next day "her beau" had given him a five-dollar bill "jest fer lettin' 'em use a leaky old boat fer an hour."

The buxom Abby Miles had the best and longest story to tell, and her praise of Mr. Nason, how polite he was, and "how he couldn't keep his eyes off'n Alice all the afternoon," was whispered to every girl she knew. The five-dollar incident created the most gossip, however. The miller had remarked that a "young feller who threw money 'round that way must be rich," and that remark soon grew into a story that Alice Page's beau was worth a million, and that she was engaged to him.

As might be expected, the subject of all this gossip heard none of it until the storm had reached alarming proportions. Some of the village swains who had tried to pay court to her and failed were inclined to sneer at the "smart young man from the city" who had cut them out; but the older people and the girls were disposed to congratulate her upon what they considered her good luck. It was this inclination

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that led Mrs. Mears to be the first one to tell the extent of the gossip.

"They tell me," said that worthy matron to Alice one Sunday, after church, "that you ain't likely to teach school after this summer."

"And why not?" answered Alice, conscious that she was likely to hear a choice bit of gossip; "don't I give satisfaction?"

"Oh, 'tain't that," was the answer; "I guess you can imagine the reason and I want to be the first to congratulate you. They tell me he's worth a pile o' money, an' he's sartinly well favored, so far as looks goes, but then, 'handsome is as handsome does' was allus my motto."

Alice colored.

"Do you mean Mr. Nason, my brother's friend?" she said nervously.

"Why, who else would I mean?" responded Mrs. Mears. "I've heard that you was to be married this fall, and that he is worth a million. They say he told Amos Curtis he was, though I don't believe that, but anyway, Amos says he gave him five dollars 'jest fer usin' his old boat that wa'n't worth splittin' up for kindlin's!'"

It was all out now, and in a moment Alice saw through the whole story and up to its source. For

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one instant she felt as if the entire town was staring at her, and grew correspondingly red. It was unfortunate, for several besides Mrs. Mears were observing her and drew their own conclusions. As for the worthy gossiper who had enlightened Alice, the blush she saw rise on her cheeks and spread until it glowed all over her face and throat was confirmation enough.

"It's not true, not one word of it," exclaimed Alice angrily, "and if you care for me one bit, I wish you would tell everybody I said so."

She waited to hear no more, nor for Aunt Susan, who had lingered to chat with some one, but walked home alone and hurriedly, as if to hide herself. Once in the silent house, she began to cool off.

"I won't believe he told Amos he was worth a million," she said to herself,—"he isn't so stupid as that; but I am afraid the silly boy did give him five dollars, which has started all this gossip."

When Aunt Susan came in she fairly pounced upon her. "Why haven't you told me, auntie, about all this gossip that's going the rounds regarding Mr. Nason and myself? I know you have heard it."

"It's all nonsense, Alice," answered that lady rather sharply, "and you are foolish to listen to 'em. I've heard it, of course, but so long as it's no discredit to you, why, let it go into one ear and out t'other, same

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as I do! Folks must talk in this town, an' what they're sayin' 'bout you ought to make you feel proud — that a young fellow like him, and worth money, wanted to come courtin', an' he certainly showed he did, or I'm no judge."

It was homely advice, and from the standpoint of Aunt Susan, as well as most of the world-wise matrons of Sandgate, it was good advice.

"He's got Aunt Susan on his side as well as Bert," Alice thought, "and I am glad I kept him at a distance now, just to pay him for being so silly with his money."

Late that afternoon Alice called upon Abby Miles, and talked about everything except the subject she most wanted to talk about, and then, as Abby usually had a Sunday evening caller, Alice came home at dusk. Never before had the house seemed so lonesome, and as she sat on the porch and tried to talk with Aunt Susan her thoughts were elsewhere.

When the lights across the valley, which served as curfew by saying bed-time when they went out, had disappeared, she came in, and seating herself in the dark at the piano softly played the chords and hummed the words of a song which need not be mentioned.

"It'll come out all right," said Aunt Susan to herself, and she waited till Alice called to her to come in and go to bed.

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CHAPTER XIX

PLOTS AND PLANS

"THE best laid schemes o' mice and men," etc., proved itself true in Frank Nason's case. He had consoled himself during the many months of hard study with visions of a yachting-trip in July and August, when perhaps in some manner Alice Page could be induced to come, with his mother and sisters to chaperone her, and her brother and some other friends to complete the party.

He had the "Gypsy" put in first-class shape and all her state-rooms refurnished, and one in particular, which he intended Alice should occupy, upholstered in blue. So well formed were his plans that he timed the start so as to utilize the July moon for the first ten days, and mapped out a trip taking in all the Maine coast, spending a week at Bar Harbor and then a run up as far east as Annapolis Bay and the coast of Acadia.

He had described all the charms of this trip to Alice and extended to her the most urgent invitation. He had obtained her brother's promise to supplement

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it and also to make one of the party, and he had persuaded his sister Blanch to aid him with his mother, but he had met discouragement on all sides. In the first place, Alice wrote it was doubtful if she could go. It would be a delightful outing, and one she would enjoy, but it would not be right to leave Aunt Susan alone for so long, and then as her school did not close until the last of June, she would have no time to get ready. These were not the sole reasons for her reluctance, and in fact she made no mention of what was her principal reason. He did not understand that Alice Page was too proud-spirited to appear willing to put herself in his way and accept an invitation having for its ultimate object the giving of an opportunity to him to court her. Then to accept his family's protectorship and hospitality for that same end was even more obnoxious. With true feminine discretion she did not dare confide this reason to her brother, and perhaps it was wise she did not.

To cap the climax of Frank's discomfiture, when July came his mother announced that she had decided to go to the mountains for the summer, and then he saw his nicely laid plans were to be an utter failure.

"It's no use, Bert," he said to his friend one evening, "I wanted your sister to go to Maine with us, and mother and the girls and a few more to make a

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party, but it's no go. I can't induce your sister to join us, and it's no use if she would, for mother has determined to go to Bethlehem, and that settles it. I feel like going out and getting full. If you and I have any outing on the yacht, we must make up a gander party."

"That suits me just as well as, and in fact better than, the other plan," replied Albert consolingly. "If we have a lot of ladies along we must dance attendance upon them, and if not we can fish, smoke, play cards, sing, or go to sleep when we feel like it. I tell you, Frank," he continued, evidently desiring to cheer up that young man, "girls are all right as companions at home or at balls and theatres, but on a yacht they are in the way. Not only are they liable to seasickness, but at every bit of rough water they will get scared and make no end of trouble."

It was very good philosophy and to a certain extent true, although it did not agree with Frank's feelings, but then it must be remembered that he was suffering from the pangs of love, while his mentor was not.

A week afterward, and early one bright morning, the "Gypsy," with skipper, crew, and a party of eight jolly young men on board, sailed out of Boston and that night dropped anchor under the lee of an island in Casco Bay. She remained there one full day and

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the next ran to Boothbay and found shelter in a land-locked cove forming part of the coast line of South-port Island. It was after dinner next day, and while the rest of the party were either playing cards or napping in hammocks under the awning, that Albert Page took one of the boats, his pipe, and sketch book, and rowed down the coast a mile to an inlet he had noticed the day before. The outer point of this was formed by a bold cliff that he desired to sketch, and pulling the boat well up behind the inner point, tying the painter to a rock and taking the cushions along, he found a shady spot and sat down. The sloping rock he selected for a seat was a little damp, but he thought nothing of it, and lighting his pipe began sketching. He worked for an hour, putting the weed-draped rocks and long swells that broke over them into his book, and then, lulled perhaps by the monotonous rhythm of the ocean, lay back on the cushions and fell asleep. The next he knew he was awakened by a cold sensation and found the tide had risen until it wet his feet. Hastily getting up, he took the cushions and returned to where he had left the boat, only to find it had disappeared. The rising tide had lifted the boat and painter from the rocks, and it was nowhere to be seen.

"There must be some road back up on the island,"

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he thought, "that will lead me near the cove where the 'Gypsy' is," and still retaining the cushions, he started to find it. But he was a stranger to Southport Island and the farther away from the sea he got, the thicker grew the tangle of scrub spruce and briers. It was too thick to see anywhere, and after a half hour of desperate scrambling, the afternoon sun began to seem about due east! He had long since dropped the cushions, and finally, in sheer exhaustion, sat down on a rock to collect himself. "It looks as though I'm billed to stay here all night," he thought, as he noted the lowering sun, "and nobody knows how much longer! There must be a road somewhere, though, and I'm going to find it if the light lasts long enough." He started once more and had not gone ten rods ere he came to one, and then he breathed easier. His clothes were torn, his hands and face scratched by briers, and to save himself he couldn't make it seem but that the sun was setting in the east! He sat down to think. All sound of the ocean was gone and a stillness that seemed to crawl out of the thicket was around him. He rested a few moments more, and then suddenly heard the sound of wheels and presently saw, coming around the curve, an old-fashioned carryall, worn and muddy, and, driving the horse at a jog trot, a man as dilapidated-looking as

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the vehicle. Gladdened at the sight, he arose, and holding up his hand as a signal, halted the team. "Excuse me, sir," he said to the man, who eyed him curiously, "but will you tell me where I am?"

"Wal," was the answer in a slow drawl, "ye'r' on Southport Island, and 'bout four miles from the jumpin' off place. Whar might ye be goin'? Ye look bushed."

"I am," answered Page, "and badly bushed too. I lost my boat over back here on the shore, and have had a cheerful time among the Mohawk briers. I belong to a yacht that is anchored in a cove of this island, I can't tell where, and if you will take me to her I'll pay you well."

The man in the wagon laughed.

"Say, stranger," he observed with a chuckle, "you 'mind me o' the feller that got full and wandered round for a spell till he fetched up to a house, an' sed to the man that cum to the door, 'If you will tell me who I am, or whar I am, or whar I want ter go, I'll give ye a dollar!'"

Page had to laugh in spite of his plight, for the humorous twinkle in the old man's eyes as he uttered his joke was infectious.

"I'd like ter 'commodate ye," he added, "but as I'm carryin' Uncle Sam's mail, an' must git home an'

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tend the light, and as ye don't know whar ye want ter go, ye best jump in an' go down to Saint's Rest, whar I live, an' in the mornin' we'll try an' hunt up yer boat."

It seemed the only thing to do, and Albert availed himself of the chance.

"Can you tell the spot where you found me?" he said to the man as they started on. "I'd like to go back there to-morrow and find my cushions."

"Wal," was the answer, "as I've druv over this road twice a day for nigh onto thirty year, I'm tolerable familiar with it. My name's Terry, an' I'm keeper o' the light at the Cape, an' carry the mail to sorter piece out on. Who might ye be?"

"My name's Page, and I'm from Boston, and a lawyer by profession," replied Albert.

Uncle Terry eyed him rather sharply.

"I wouldn't 'a' took ye fer one o' them dern pickpockets," he said, "ye look too honest. I ain't much stuck on lawyers," he added, with a chuckle. "I've had 'sperence with 'em. One of 'em sold me a hole in the ground onct, an' it cost me the hull o' twenty years' savin's! You'll 'scuse me fer bein' blunt — it's my natur."

"Oh, I don't mind," responded Albert laughingly; "not all of my profession are thieves,

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though some are. You mustn't judge us all by one rascal."

They drove on, and as they jogged up and down the sharp hills he caught sight here and there of the ocean, and alongside the road, which consisted of two ruts, a path, and two grass-grown ridges, he saw wild roses in endless profusion. On either hand was an interminable thicket. In the little valleys grew masses of rank ferns, and on the ridges, interspersed between the wild roses, clusters of red bunch-berries. The sun was almost down when they reached the top of a long hill and he saw at its foot a small harbor connected with the ocean by a narrow inlet, and around it a dozen or more brown houses. Beyond was a tangle of rocks and, rising above them, the top of a white lighthouse. Uncle Terry, who had kept up a running fire of questions all the time, halted the horse and said:

"Ye can now take yer first look at Saint's Rest, otherwise known as the Cape. We ketch some lobsters an' fish here an' hev prayer-meetin's once a week." Then he chirruped to the horse and they rattled down the hill to a small store where he left a mail pouch, and then followed a winding road between the scattered houses and out to the point, where stood a neat white dwelling close beside a lighthouse.

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"I'll take ye into the house," said Uncle Terry as the two alighted, "an' tell the wimmin folks to put on an extra plate, an' then I'll put up the hoss."

"I'm afraid I'm putting your family to some inconvenience," responded Albert, "and as it is not dark yet, I will walk out on the point. I may see the yacht and save you all trouble."

The sun, a ball of fire, was almost at the horizon, the sea all around lay an unruffled expanse of dark blue, undulating with the ground swells that caught the red glow of the sinking sun as they came in and broke upon the rocks. Albert walked on to the highest of the shore rocks and looked about. There was no sign of the "Gypsy," and only one boat was visible, and that a dory rowed by a man standing upright. Over the still waters Albert could detect the measured stroke of his oars. That and the low rumble of the ground swells, breaking almost at his feet, were the only sounds. It was like a dream of solitude, far removed from the world and all its distractions. For a few moments he stood contemplating the ocean alight with the setting sun's red glow, the gray rocks at his feet and the tall white lighthouse towering above him, and then started around the point. He had not taken ten steps when he saw the figure of a girl leaning against a rock and watching

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the setting sun. One elbow was resting on the rock, her face reposing in her open hand and fingers half hid in the thick masses of hair that shone in the sunlight like burnished gold. A broad sun-hat lay on the rock, and the delicate profile of her face was sharply outlined against the western sky.

She had not heard Albert's steps, but stood there unconscious of his scrutiny. He noted the classic contour of her features; the delicate oval of her lips and chin; and his artist eye dwelt upon and admired her rounded bosom and perfect shoulders. Had she posed for a picture, she could not have chosen a better position, and so alluring, and withal so sweet and unconscious, that for a moment he forgot all else, even his own rudeness in standing there and staring at her. Then he recovered himself, and turning, softly retraced his steps so as not to disturb her. Who she was he had no idea, and was still wondering, when he met Uncle Terry, who at once invited him into the house.

"This 'ere's Mr. Page, Lissy," he said, as they entered, and met a stout, elderly, and gray-haired woman; "I found him up the road a spell, an' wantin' to know whar he was!"

Albert bowed, and was surprised to see her advance and greet him with a cordial handshake.

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"I am sorry to intrude," he said, "but I had lost my boat, and all points of the compass, when your husband kindly took me in charge."

He started to say he would pay for all trouble, but fortunately did not, and then being offered a chair, sat down and was left alone. For ten minutes, that seemed longer, he surveyed the plainly furnished sitting-room, with open fireplace, a many colored rag-carpet on the floor, old-fashioned chairs, and dozens of pictures on the walls. They caught his eye at once, mainly because of the oddity of the frames, which were evidently home-made, for it was too dark to see more, and then a door was opened, and Uncle Terry invited him into a lighted room where a table was set. The elderly lady was standing at one end of it, and beside her a younger one, and as Albert entered he heard Uncle Terry say: "This is our gal Telly, Mr. Page," and as he bowed he saw, garbed in spotless white, the girl he had seen leaning against the rock and watching the sunset.

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CHAPTER XX

A PAIR OF BLUE EYES

SOME men have their fancy caught by a woman's face or form, or both; others by a look, a word, a smile. A witty reply to some masculine jest has tipped many an arrow for Cupid and won for a maiden a lover.

The appealing yet wondering glance that Albert Page met as he bowed to the girl standing beside the table that evening was one he never afterwards forgot. It was only one, for after that, and during the entire meal, her blue eyes were kept veiled by their long lashes, or modestly directed elsewhere.

"It's a charming spot down here," he remarked soon after the meal began, "and so hidden away that it is a surprise. I noticed the light as we came in, but did not see the village."

"Wal, ye didn't miss anything," responded his host; "none o' the houses are much for style, an' mebbe it's lucky they're hid behind the rocks."

"I thought them quaint and comfortable," observed

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Albert; "but what an odd name you have for the place! Why do you call it Saint's Rest?"

"Chiefly 'cause none o' the people have any chance to become sinners, I reckon," was the answer; "it's a trifle lonesome in the winter, though."

"I suppose fishing is your principal occupation here," continued Albert, seeing that sentiment was not considered by Uncle Terry; "your land does not seem adapted for cultivation."

"There ain't much chance for tillin'," he replied; "the land's wuss'n whar I was brung up down in Connecticut, an' thar we had ter round up the sheep once a week an' sharpen thar noses on the grin'stun! We manage ter raise 'nough ter eat, though."

When the meal was over Uncle Terry said, "It's nice an' cool out on the rocks, and thar's some seats out thar; if ye enjoy smoking we best go out while the wimmin are doin' the dishes."

The moon that Frank had planned to use was nearing its full, and high overhead, and as the two men, so widely separated in all respects, sought congeniality in tobacco out on that lonesome point, Albert could not curb his admiration for the scene. His offer of a cigar to his host had been accepted, and as that quaint man sat quietly enjoying an odor and flavor he was certainly unaccustomed to, Albert said:

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"This experience has been a surprise to me from the moment I met you. I had an ugly hour's scramble over the rocks and through a tangle of scrub spruce and briers until I was utterly lost and believed this island an impassable wilderness. Then you came along and brought me to one of the most beautiful spots I ever saw. I should like to stay here all summer and do nothing but look at this magnificent ocean view and sketch these bold shores."

"Do you paint picturs too?" queried Uncle Terry, suddenly interested. "Telly's daft on doing that, an' is at it all the time she can git!" Then he added with a slight inflection of pride, "Mebbe ye noticed some o' her picturs in the sittin'-room?"

"I saw a lot of pictures there," answered Albert, "but it was too dark to see them well. I should like to look at them in the morning."

"Ye'll hev plenty o' time," was the reply, "I must pull my lobster traps fust, an' after that I'll take ye in my dory an' we'll go an' find yer boat. I guess she must be lyin' in Seal Cove, the only openin' 'twixt here an' the head she'd be likely ter run into."

"And so your daughter is an artist, is she?" asked Albert, indifferent now as to where the "Gypsy" was or when he was likely to return to her. He came near adding that that fact was another surprise, but

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did not. Instead he said, "Has she ever taken lessons?"

"No, it comes nat'ral to her," replied Uncle Terry; "she showed the bent o' her mind 'fore she was ten years old, an' she's pestered me ever since ter git her canvas an' paints an' sich. But then, I'm willin' ter," he added in a tender tone. "Telly's a good girl and Lissy and me set great store by her. She's all we've got in the world;" then pointing to a small white stone just to the right of where they were, he added, "Thar's whar the other one's been layin' fer mor'n twenty years."

"This one has grown to be a very beautiful girl," said Albert quietly, "and you have reason to be proud of her."

Uncle Terry made no reply, but seemed lost in a reverie, and Albert slowly puffed his cigar and looked out on the ocean, and along the ever-widening path of moonlight. He very much wished that this fair girl, so quaintly spoken of, were there beside him, that he might talk to her about her art. And as he grew curious and a bit surprised at the sort of people he had unexpectedly come upon, a little desire to know at least one of them a good deal better came to him. How it could be managed, and what excuse to give for remaining longer than the morrow, he could not

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see, and yet very much wished to find one. He looked toward the house, white in the moonlight, with the tall lighthouse and its beacon flash just beyond, and wondered if he should see the girl again that night. He hoped he might, and was on the point of suggesting they go in and visit a little with the ladies when Uncle Terry said:

"I believe ye called yerself a lawyer, Mr. Page, an' from Boston. Do ye happen to know a lawyer thar that has got eyes like a cat, an' a nose like a gentleman from Jerusalem, an' rubs his hands as if he was washin' 'em while he's talkin'?"

Albert gave a start. "I do, Mr. Terry," he answered, "I know him well. His name is Frye, Nicholas Frye."

"An' as you're a lawyer, an' one that looks to me as honest," continued Uncle Terry, "what is your honest opinion o' this Mr. Frye?"

"That is a question I would rather not answer," replied Albert, "until I know why you ask it, and what your opinion of Mr. Frye is. Mine might not flatter him, and I do not believe in speaking ill of anybody unless forced to."

Uncle Terry was silent, evidently revolving a serious problem in his mind. "I am goin' ter beg yer pardon, Mr. Page," he said at last, "fer speakin' the

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way I did regardin' lawyers in gineral. My 'sperence with 'em has been bad, an' naterally I don't trust 'em much. I've had some dealin's with this ere Frye 'bout a matter I don't want to tell 'bout, an' the way things is workin' ain't as they should be. I b'lieve I'm robbed right along, an' if ye'r' willin' ter help me I shall be most tarnally grateful, an' will give ye my word I'll never let on ter anybody what ye say — an' Silas Terry never yit broke his promise."

Albert silently offered his hand to Uncle Terry, who grasped it cordially. "I will tell you, Mr. Terry," he said after the handshake, "all I know about Mr. Frye and what my opinion is of him. What your business with him is, matters not. I am certain you are an honest man and will keep your word. I recently worked for Mr. Frye six months and left him to open an office for myself. He offered me more than double what he had been paying to remain, but no money would tempt me to do it. In that six months I became satisfied Nicholas Frye was the most unprincipled villain ever masked under the name of lawyer. If all those you have had business with were like him I don't wonder at your remark today."

Uncle Terry leaned forward with elbows on his knees, resting his face in the palms of his hands, and ejaculated: "I knew it! I knew it! I'm a blamed old

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fool an' ought ter hev a keeper put over me!" Then turning to Albert he added, "I've paid that dum thief over four hundred dollars this year an' hain't got a scrap o' paper ter show fer't, and nothin's been done so fer as I kin see 'bout the business." He meditated a few moments, and then turning around suddenly added, "My wife an' Telly don't know nothin' 'bout this, and I don't want they should. Thar's a sucker born every minit and two ter ketch him, an' I b'lieve it! I've been ketched an' skinned fer dead sure! I want ter sleep on't, an' mebbe in the mornin' I'll tell ye the hull story, an' how I've been made a fool of. I'm beginnin' ter think I kin trust ye."

"I thank you for your good opinion," answered Albert, "and if I can help you any way I will."

When the two returned to the house Albert was shown to a room that reminded him of his boyhood home, the old-fashioned bed, spotless counterpane, and muslin curtains all seemed so sweet and wholesome. A faint odor of lavender carried him back to the time when his mother's bed linen exhaled the same sweet fragrance. He lighted a cigar and sat down by a window where crisp salt sea air came in, and tried to fathom what manner of business Uncle Terry could have with Frye. It was an enigma, and as he looked

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out on the wide expanse of moonlit ocean where every wave sparkled with silvery light, and listened to the ceaseless rhythm of the long swells breaking upon the rocks almost under his window, he could not solve it. That the odd-spoken old man was in sore distress was evident, and for an hour Albert watched the sparkling sea in vain imaginings as to what Uncle Terry's business with Frye could be. And into his meditation also crept the face and form of the girl he had first seen watching the sunset.

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CHAPTER XXI

A NEW CLIENT

WHEN Albert arose the next morning the sun was just appearing round and red out of the ocean, and a crisp breeze blowing into the open windows. He heard the stir of some one below, and, dressing quickly, descended to the sitting-room. No one was there, and he stood for a moment looking at the curiously framed paintings that almost covered the wall.

One in particular caught his eye. It was a ship careened on the ocean with waves breaking upon her. She was resting on rocks that barely showed beneath, and in her rigging, heavily covered with ice, were five men. All around was the sea, tossed into giant waves, curling and breaking about the stranded vessel. He noted the life-like shading of the green and white billows; the ice that covered every shroud and rope and spar; and peering out of a cabin door was a woman holding a babe in her arms. In a way it was a ghastly picture, and one that held his attention from all the rest.

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It was framed in a broad flat moulding covered with shells. He was still gazing at it when he heard Uncle Terry's voice bidding him good morning.

"Ain't ye up a little arly?" said that worthy; "I hope ye slep' well. I ginerally roust out by daylight an' put out the light an' then start a fire, but thar was no need o' you gittin' out so soon."

"I think the waves woke me," replied Albert, "and the morning is so beautiful I couldn't waste it in bed."

"I'm goin' over to the cove to mend a trap," continued Uncle Terry, "an' if ye'r' willin', I'd like ter hev ye go along too. The wimmin'll hev breakfast ready by that time, an' then I'll take ye up to Seal Cove an' see if yer boat's thar."

He seemed depressed and not inclined to talk, and as Albert sat on an overturned dory and watched him puttering away over a lobster trap, he began to feel sorry for him. His hat had fallen off and the sea winds blew his scant fringe of gray hair over his bald head. His brown shirt was open at the throat, disclosing a bony neck, and his well-worn garments showed the outlines of a somewhat wasted form. What impressed Albert more than all this was the dejected manner of Uncle Terry. It was as if an unexpected sorrow had come upon him. When he finished fixing the trap he pulled a dory in that was moored

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out in the cove and carefully bailed and wiped it clean. When this was done he said almost wistfully: "I've worried a good deal 'bout what you told me last night, an' I'd like ter have a good talk with ye. I s'pose ye'r' anxious ter see yer friends an' let 'em know ye'r' all safe, an' I'll take ye up the island the fust thing an' then go an' pull my traps, and then if ye'r' willin' we'll sot down, if it ain't askin' too much o' ye ter wait," he added almost pathetically. "I'll get Telly to show ye her picturs, and mebbe ye can give her some pints as'll help her."

"I shall be more than glad to do so," replied Albert, "but if that shipwreck scene is hers, she needs no advice from me."

Uncle Terry looked pleased, but made no answer. On the way back to the house he said: "I'd ruther ye'd make no mention to the wimmin of our hevin' any talk."

At the breakfast table he seemed in better spirits, and more like himself.

"I think ye told me last night," he remarked, addressing Albert, "that ye painted picturs yerself some." And then turning to Telly he added: "Mr. Page is comin' back here bimeby, jest to look 'round, an' mebbe he'd like ter look at some o' yourn."

Telly's face flushed slightly. "I shall be de-

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lighted," added Albert, "if Miss Terry will favor me. Will you?" he added in a persuasive tone.

"I do not feel that my pictures are good enough to show to strangers," she answered in a low voice; "I have never had any lessons or any one to show me."

"From what I've noticed in your sitting-room," responded Albert quickly, "you need not be ashamed to show them to an artist. I am not one. I only sketch a little, just as a remembrance of places I visit, but I love pictures even better than music."

"I will gladly show you what I have done," replied Telly simply, and there the conversation ended. When the meal was over Albert observed: "With your permission, Mrs. Terry, I would like to make a sketch of your home and the lighthouse, and after Mr. Terry has helped me find my friends I am coming back." Then turning to Telly he added: "I can then feel easy in my mind, and shall enjoy looking over your paintings."

"Won't ye stop to dinner with us?" asked Aunt Lissy, as Albert thanked her for her hospitality; "we'll be glad to have ye."

"I will, thank you," replied Albert; "this point, and in fact this village, was such a surprise to me, and is so charming, I am going to devote all my day to it." Then bidding the ladies good morning, he followed

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Uncle Terry over to the cove, where they boarded his dory and started out to find the "Gypsy."

Albert had spoken truly when he expressed surprise at the charms of the Cape and Uncle Terry's home, and not the least of it was the hospitality shown him in that home. But perhaps the greatest surprise of all was the finding of so fair a girl as Telly hid away, as it were, in an unheard-of corner of the world. "And she has the soul of an artist in her," he said to himself, as Uncle Terry pulled the dory out of the harbor and up the coast towards where he had been left stranded; "and what eyes, and what a perfect form!"

Then, as good luck would have it, when they rounded a point, there was the "Gypsy" following the island shore down to meet them. Albert stood up and waved his cap. He was answered by the whistle, and in an instant every one on board of her, even the crew, were out on her bows and waving caps lustily. The skipper kept the whistle blowing, and as the yacht slowed down and Uncle Terry pulled alongside, Albert was seized and almost dragged on board. Frank was so overjoyed he hugged him, and then gave vent to a war-whoop that might have been heard the entire length of Southport Island.

"We guessed what had happened to you," he said,

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"when we picked up your boat. It was almost dark when one of the crew saw an empty boat floating up the bay. We were all down in the cabin at that time, and had not noticed how late it was, when he called us. Two of the crew lowered the other boat, and when they got back with yours we nearly had a fit. The missing cushions and loop on the painter gave us a clue, and we half expected you would find your way back to the 'Gypsy' by land."

"I guess you're not much acquainted with the interior of Southport Island," put in Albert; and then going forward he brought back Uncle Terry, and introduced him to the crowd. By this time the "Gypsy" was almost down to the Cape, and under one bell, and the direction of Uncle Terry, she slowly steamed in. That worthy man had been looking over her, and his admiration was evident.

"A purty slick craft, boys," he said to the party, as the "Gypsy's" anchor ceased rattling out of the hawse-hole, — "a purty slick craft, an' must 'a' cost a heap o' money."

Then as he pulled his own weather-beaten dory that had been towing astern along to the gangway, Albert stepped up to him and said in a low voice:

"Will you excuse me a little while, Mr. Terry? I want to change my clothes, and in an hour or so I

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will come ashore, and not only thank you for all your kindness, but make you a visit."

When Uncle Terry had gone Albert related his experiences for the past eighteen hours to the party — that is, all but one incident, or rather surprise, and that he omitted for reasons best known to himself. Then nothing would do but they must all go ashore, and look the quaint little village over.

"I wish you would keep away from the lighthouse, boys," Albert said, as they were getting into their boat. "Mr. Terry's family are rather sensitive people and may not like to have a lot of us trooping around their place. I am going over there this afternoon to make a sketch, and then I'll ask permission, and we'll all go there some other day."

He had whispered to Frank to remain on the yacht, and when the rest were gone he said to him: "Frank, I am going to confide something to you, and I want you to promise me on your honor not to hint it to any of our friends." When that astonished young man had promised to keep mum, Albert continued, "The fact is, Frank, I've tumbled into an adventure, and fallen in love with a girl on sight, and without having exchanged ten words with her! She is Mr. Terry's daughter, and has eyes that take your breath away, and a form like the Venus of Milo. She paints pictures

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that are a wonder, considering she never has taken a lesson, and has a face more bewitching than any woman's I ever saw. It is like a painter's dream."

"Well, you have gone daft, old man," replied the astonished Frank, breaking into a laugh in which Albert joined, and then adding with mischief in his eyes, "Does she take good care of her teeth and finger-nails, Bert?"

Albert frowned. "Don't for heaven's sake mention her in the same breath with those cigarette-smoking blemishes on their sex!" he answered; and then he added more pleasantly, "But you haven't heard it all yet. This unique old man, who saved me from sleeping all night in a thicket of briers, and who has opened his heart and home to me, has fallen into the clutches of — Nicholas Frye!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Frank, "and how on earth did he ever find Frye, or Frye find him? Was your old man of the island hunting around Boston for some one to rob him?"

"That I do not know yet," replied Albert; "all I know is that Mr. Terry has paid Frye about four hundred dollars, and, as he says, so far has nothing to show for it. What the business was I expect to learn later. Now what I am coming at is this: can't you manage to leave me here for the rest of the day, or,

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better still, make it two days? I'll tell the boys I've tumbled into a bit of law business, which is what I think will come out of it, and you can run down to Bar Harbor, or out to Monhegan and back here to-morrow night."

"Well, I'll do that gladly," replied Frank; and then he added with a droll smile, "It will give you a chance to say a few sweet things to this girl with the wondrous eyes, eh, Bert?"

"Please don't joke me about her before the rest of the crowd," said Albert; "remember your promise!"

"Well, you told the truth when you said you had fallen in love with her, I guess," observed Frank; "a fellow that feels that way about a girl must be in love."

"My dear boy," replied Albert, "what you say may be true, but I've not yet insisted upon her singing 'Ben Bolt' three times in one evening."

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CHAPTER XXII

UNCLE TERRY'S GUEST

It was nearly noon when Albert left the yacht. He had exchanged his bedraggled yachting-suit for a neat gray one, and with a small satchel, his sketch-book, and a box of choice Havanas for Uncle Terry, he rowed ashore. For three hours the "Gypsy" had been the cynosure of all the Cape eyes, old or young, for a handsome two-hundred-ton yacht was a novelty in their little harbor. When she steamed slowly out, with Frank and his companions, in natty white duck suits, grouped on her stern, she was a pretty sight, and as she cleared the narrow entrance, the crew fired three guns and dipped her flag in honor of Albert, and then he picked his way over the rocks to the lighthouse. Uncle Terry had not returned from hauling his lobster traps, and Aunt Lissy and Telly met him at the door. It is likely that his being one of the yachting-party impressed them a little, for they were both dressed in their best. He was invited in, and then Aunt Lissy said: "Please excuse me,

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fur I have dinner to git, and Telly will entertain ye."

"And show me her pictures, I hope," put in Albert, with his most persuasive smile.

It was an awkward position for Telly, and one that she had never before been called upon to fill. Rather shy naturally, and her sole acquaintance with the usages of society limited to the few people among whom she had been brought up, to be called upon to entertain a smartly dressed and citified young man was a decidedly new experience. Albert saw her embarrassment, and with true gallantry at once set about making her feel at ease.

"Please do not feel that you must try to entertain me, Miss Terry," he said, "only show me your pictures and tell me about them."

"I am almost ashamed to," she replied timidly; "I have never taken any lessons and feel that I do not know anything about painting. Father says you are an artist yourself."

"Oh, no, Miss Terry," exclaimed Albert quickly, "he misunderstood me. I only sketch a little and once in a while make an effort to put a sketch that is of interest on canvas. All I can tell is when one looks lifelike; for instance," — pointing to it, — "that

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shipwreck scene. It is wonderfully well done. Did you paint it from a real wreck?"

Telly colored. "No, sir," she answered, "that was all done from father's description of a wreck that took place off the point one winter when I was a baby." Then, as if to check further questions, she stepped to a closet, brought him a small unframed picture, and added, "There is one I have just finished."

It was a view of a tall cliff with a low shelf of rock at its base, over which the waves were breaking. Albert recognized it at once. "Why, that is the very point," he exclaimed, "that I was sketching yesterday when my boat drifted away. Did you paint it from a broad flat rock on the west side of the cove?"

"Oh, yes, that is the spot," replied Telly, looking pleased. "It is shady there, and I used to row up and paint in the afternoon. It is strange you went to the same place."

The ice was broken now, and Telly's shyness was almost gone.

"Father told me about finding you," she said, "and that you were turned around. You must have had a hard tramp, for it's all of two miles from where you were to this cove, and an awful tangle all the way, he said."

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"I was decidedly turned when he came to my rescue," Albert replied, "and the sun seemed to be setting in the east. It was very kind of your father to take care of me the way he has, and I shall never forget it."

It is not hard for two young people of opposite sex to get acquainted when each desires to entertain the other and they have at least one well-defined taste in common. In this case when the masculine one felt a sudden admiration for his companion and brought all his resource of tact and subtle flattery to bear, they were soon on the very best of terms. Albert did not talk much, but adroitly induced Telly to do most of it. In the hour they passed together he discovered that two impulses were nearest her heart — the first and strongest her devotion to Mr. Terry, and after that a desire to paint.

"I do not ever hope to do much," she admitted rather pathetically; "I never have taken lessons and maybe never shall. I would not think of asking father to let me go away, and all I can do is to work blindly. I often sit for hours trying to put things I see on canvas, only to fail utterly and begin all over again. I should not mind it if I could see that I made any progress, but I do not. I can't let it alone, though, for the most happy hours I have are when I'm painting."

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"You certainly have perseverance," responded Albert encouragingly, "and the pictures you have shown me seem very life-like. I wish I could do as well. You have done good work for one self-taught as you are, and you have no reason to be discouraged."

Then Uncle Terry came in and announced dinner. It was rather a state affair for the Terry household, and the table bore their best dinner service, with a vase of flowers in the centre.

"I hope ye feel hungry," said Uncle Terry, as he passed a well-filled plate to Albert, "for we live plain, and it's good appetite as makes good vittles. I s'pose ye are used ter purty high livin'?"

"Whatever tastes good is good," replied Albert, and turning to Aunt Lissy he added, "This fried lobster beats anything I have tasted for a long time."

When the meal was over he handed the box of cigars he had brought to his host with the remark, "Please accept these, Mr. Terry, and when you smoke them, think of the forlorn fellow you found by the wayside."

"I've got ter leave ye ter th' tender marcies o' the wimmin folks," said Uncle Terry, after thanking Albert, "for I've got work to do, and to-night we'll have a visit. I hope you'll be willin' to stay with us

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a day or two," he added, "an' to-morrow I'll take ye out fishin'."

"I will stay until to-morrow, thank you," replied Albert, "and it will be a treat to me, I assure you."

It was a new departure for him to find so cordial a welcome among total strangers, and he could not quite understand it. He was not inclined to quarrel with fate, however, especially when it had thrown him into the society of such people. It is needless to say the "tender marcies" of at least one of them were quite to his taste.

"I should like to row up to where I was left boatless yesterday," he said to Telly after Uncle Terry had gone, "and finish the sketch I began, and also try to find the cushions I dropped in the woods; may I ask you to go too?"

"I should be glad to if mother can spare me," she answered.

When he rowed out of the little harbor where he had left his boat, Telly sat in the stern holding the tiller ropes, and shading her winsome face was the same broad sun-hat he had seen on the rock beside her the evening before. It was a long four-mile pull, but he was unconscious of it, and when he helped his companion out and secured the boat he said, "Now I am going to ask a favor of you, Miss Terry. I want

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you to stand in just the position I first saw you and let me make a sketch of you. You were leaning on a rock and resting your head on one hand."

Telly looked puzzled.

"You did not know I saw you out on the point last evening, did you?" he added, smiling. "I stood and looked at you for five minutes and then walked away. I did not know who you were then, or that I should meet you later. If I had I would not have been so rude."

The color came to Telly's face at his evident admiration, but she did not say no to his proposal and stood patiently in the position he wished while he made the sketch. "There," he exclaimed when it was finished, "I shall transfer that to canvas when I go back, and whenever I look at it I shall recall this day and — you."

"Will you need the picture for that?" she replied with a smile. It was the first little coquettish word she had uttered, and it amused Albert. "That sounds like Alice," he said, and added hastily, "Alice is my only sister, and I think more of her than of any other woman living."

What these two young people, so rapidly becoming acquainted, had to say all that long summer afternoon need not be recorded. Telly sat on the boat's

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cushions in a shady nook and watched Albert finish his sketch and then listened to his talk. He told her all about his home and sister, and Frank as well. In a way they exchanged a good deal of personal history of interest to each other, but to no one else, so it need not be repeated. Then they gathered flowers, like two children, and Telly insisted on decorating the boat. When it was done she wanted him to make a sketch of it for her. "Draw yourself as holding the oars," she said, "and I will try to paint a picture from the sketch to remember you by," she added with a smile. Then, as the sun was getting low, they started for home. The breeze had all vanished and the sea was like glass. Only the long ground swells barely lifted their boat and made the shadows of the trees along the shore wave in fantastic undulations. When they reached the Cape Telly said, "You had better go around to the cove where father keeps his boats. It's nearer to the house, and there is a float there where you can pull your boat out."

She waited until he had done so, and then stooped and selected a few of the flowers with which they had decked the boat. "I am going to paint them," she said quietly, as she turned and followed Albert up to the house.

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CHAPTER XXIII

A STRANGE STORY

UNCLE TERRY and Albert had just seated themselves on the point that evening when Telly came out with a thick gray shawl and wrapped it around her father's shoulders. "It's a little chilly to-night," she said, "and I think you need it." Then turning to Albert she added, "Wouldn't you like one too, Mr. Page?" He didn't in the least need any protection, but that made no difference. "I would, thank you," he answered, "if you have another to spare." He would have answered yes if she had asked him to put on woollen mittens. She returned to the house and came back, this time bearing a white zephyr wrap, and handed it to Albert. "I will bid you good-night, now," she said, "for I presume you will sit here long after bedtime."

Uncle Terry's eyes followed her back to the house, and then he turned to his guest.

"I s'pose ye'd rather be talking to Telly than me, out here in the moonlight," he said bluntly, "now

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that ye've got a little acquainted. It's the way o' young folks."

"I've had a very pleasant visit with your daughter this afternoon," responded Albert; "she was good enough to go with me to where I got left yesterday. I wanted to finish the sketch I began there." Uncle Terry made no answer, but sat puffing away at one of the cigars Albert had given him.

"We don't git cigars like this here," he said at last, "an' they must cost a lot o' money." Albert made no reply, but waited quietly for the revelation he felt was coming.

"Mr. Page," said Uncle Terry at last, "I've worried a good deal since last night 'bout what you told me, an' I've made up my mind to tell ye the hull story an' trust ye with what no one else knows. To begin with, it's nineteen years ago last March when thar war a vessel got a-foul o' a ledge jest off'n the pint here in a snow-storm, an' all hands went down; that is, all but a little yearlin' baby that cum ashore tied up 'tween two feather-beds. I fished her out o' the surf, an' Lissy an' me has taken care on her ever since, an' to-day she's worth a thousand times more'n she cost. How much she thinks o' me I'll let ye jedge by the way she thought 'bout my comfort to-night. There was a few trinkets came ashore with

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her — picturs o' her father an' mother, we knew, an' a locket an' ring and some other things, so we knowed her name and whar she cum from. Since then we have never heard a word from no one regardin' her people, or whether any was livin', till last winter I cum across a notice in a paper sayin' information was wanted 'bout an heir to an estate in Sweden, and tellin' facts that made me sure Telly was the one wanted. The notice was signed by that lawyer, Frye, that I asked ye 'bout, an' I went to see him. He wanted proofs an' all that, an' I gave 'em to him, an' wussen that, he wanted money, an' I gave that to him. He's kept askin' fer money ever since, an' I, like a dum fool, kept sendin' it, in hopes, if Telly had anything comin', she'd git her dues. I've sent him the locket and things that belonged to her, and all I've got so far is letters askin' for more money an' tellin' 'bout expenses an' evidence an' witnesses' fees an' bonds to be filed. Lissy an' Telly know 'bout the case, but they don't know how much money I've paid out, an' I don't want they should. That's the hull story, an' now as you're a lawyer, an' I b'lieve an honest one, I ask ye what's best to be done."

For fully five minutes Albert said nothing. The story was so startling and opened such a wide horizon

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of possibilities that he was speechless. Then, perhaps, the distress in Uncle Terry's face and speech appealed to him, for he said: "I see now, Mr. Terry, why you distrust lawyers, and I do not wonder at it. To the best of my belief you have been swindled in the most outrageous manner by Frye. He no doubt is acting for some law firm who have instructed him to find an heir, if there is one, to this estate, and they would naturally advance all expense money. Do you know the vessel's name, where she sailed from, and who her master was?"

"She was a square-rigger, and the master's name was Peterson; in the newspaper piece the name was Neils Peterson who cum from Stockholm," answered Uncle Terry. "I've got it in my wallet now, an' on the locket was the letters E. P., an' on a piece o' paper that was pinned to the baby's dress was the name Etelka Peterson."

"And did you send these proofs to Frye?" asked Albert quickly.

"I sent 'em six months ago," was the reply, "an' I've jest 'bout made up my mind I was a fool to 'a' done it, an' a bigger one to keep sendin' money."

"It would have been all right," answered Albert after a pause, "if you had put them into an honest man's hands. As it is you are lame — in fact, utterly

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at the mercy of Frye, who is robbing you." Then after thinking a moment he added, "I will gladly do what I can to help you, Mr. Terry, and at no cost to you for my own services. The first step must be to get possession of these material proofs, the next to find what firm has employed Frye. That will be easier than to get the trinkets, as you call them, back. We might issue a writ of replevin and search Frye's office, but then we are not sure of finding them. They are so valuable in the case that you may be sure Frye has them safe in hiding and will deny possession. Even if we find who employ him and lay the matter before them, he will declare us impostors and block us at once. As I said, we are helpless until we get possession of those proofs."

"Ain't my word an' Lissy's as to savin' the baby no 'count?" asked Uncle Terry.

"Very good so far as it goes," answered Albert, "but really no proof that the child you saved is the one wanted for this inheritance. In the matter of a legacy the law is very exacting and demands absolute proof. No, the only way is to use duplicity and trick Frye, or ask him to name his price and pay it, and as the estate may be large, his price will naturally be extortionate."

Albert thought a moment and then added, "Has

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Frye ever written you admitting he has received or has those proofs in his possession?"

"Not a word," answered Uncle Terry; "all he writes is, 'Your case is progressing favorably. I need so much more money,' an' I send it an' lay 'wake nights worryin'."

"How long since he has sent for money?" asked Albert.

"'Bout a month, I reckon," replied Uncle Terry.

Albert leaned forward, resting his face on both hands and thinking. It was a hard case to solve, and knowing the manner of man Frye was, and how nearly impossible it would be to trick him, a past master in all kinds of duplicity, he was at his wits' end. The more he thought the matter over, the harder the problem seemed. "We might have you go into his office with one or two of your neighbors," he said, "to act as witnesses, and by some question get him to admit he has these articles, and then bring suit; but I do not think he would say anything before a third party. We might employ a detective, but Frye is too shrewd to be caught napping. I confess, Mr. Terry, I am stumped, and can see no way out of the dilemma." Then he lighted a fresh cigar and gazed meditatively upon the ocean where the ever-broadening path of moonshine stretched away. Only a little way out

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the ground swells were breaking upon a long narrow reef, and as it caught his eye there came to him the memory of the pictured wreck he had noticed in Uncle Terry's sitting-room that morning, and Telly's evident wish to avoid all questions regarding it. Then it dawned upon him that that subject might be a tender one with her, and maybe that in some way she felt her history was a cloud upon her life, or perhaps a humiliation. He turned to Uncle Terry again:

"How does your — I mean, how does Telly feel about this matter, Mr. Terry, for I suppose she knows the story?"

"That's suthin' I hate ter talk 'bout, but as ye'r' likely to see more o' us an' more o' Telly, it's better ye know it all. When she was 'bout ten we told her the story, and showed her the things we'd kep' locked up. She didn't seem ter mind it then, but as she's growed older it sorter shadders her life, as it were. We used ter ketch her lookin' at the things once in a while, an' cryin'. When I sent 'em to Boston she took on a good deal, an' ain't been the same sence. We try to keep her from thinkin' 'bout it all we can, but she's curis in her ways, and I've thought she was kinder 'shamed, an' mebbe broodin' over it makes it wuss."

This was a new phase of the trouble to Albert, and

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one he could not quite understand. "You do not mean that you fear she would make away with herself in a fit of melancholy, do you?" he asked.

"I dunno what to think," was the answer, "only I hate to have her out o' sight much, an' the more lovin' she is the more I worry. I've bin sorry at times I ever went to Frye, but it's too late ter back out now."

"One thing please promise me," said Albert when they had started for the house, "do not hint either to her or your wife that you have told me anything about this matter. I will do all that can be done, and consult only with you, in private."

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CHAPTER XXIV

A WHISPER OF THE OCEAN

THE next day was a red-letter one in Albert's history. In the morning he followed Uncle Terry around the circuit of his lobster traps in the "Gypsy's" boat, with Telly as a companion, and watched the old man hauling and rebaiting those elongated coops and taking out his hideous prizes. The day was a perfect one, the sea just ruffled by a light breeze, and as her first timidity had now worn away, he found Telly a most charming companion. She not only loved the ocean that in a way had been her playmate since childhood, but she had an artist's eye for all its beauties. How many features, new to Albert, she called to his attention, and how her naïve observations, so fresh and delightful, each and all interested him, need not be quoted. It was an entirely new experience to him, and the four hours' pull in and out of the island coves and around isolated ledges where Uncle Terry set his traps passed all too quickly.

"Do you know," said Albert when they had

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returned to the little cove where Uncle Terry kept his boats, and as he sat watching him pick up his morning's catch and toss them one by one into a large car, "that the first man who thought of eating a lobster must have been almost starved. Of all creatures that grow in the sea, there is none more hideous, and only a hungry savage could have thought them fit for food."

"They ain't over hansum," replied Uncle Terry, "but fried in pork fat they go middlin' good if ye're hungry."

That afternoon Telly invited Albert to row her up to a cove, at the head of which was a narrow valley where blueberries grew in profusion. "I want to pick a few," she said, "and you can make a sketch of the cove while I do." It must be recorded that helping her picking berries proved more attractive, and when her pail was full, all he did in that line was to make a picture of her sitting in front of a pretty cluster of small spruce trees, with the pail beside her and her sun-hat trimmed with ferns.

"Your city friends will laugh at the country girl you found down in Maine," she remarked as she looked at the sketch, "but as they will never see me, I don't care."

"My friends will never see it," he answered quietly,

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"only my sister. And I am going to bring her down here next summer."

"Tell me about her," said Telly at once, "is she pretty?"

"I think so," replied Albert, "she has eyes like yours, only her hair is not so light. She is a petite little body and has a mouth that makes one want to kiss her."

"I should like to see her ever so much," responded Telly, and then she added rather sadly, "I've never had a girl friend in my life. There are only a few at the Cape of my age, and I don't see much of them. I don't mind it in the summer, for then I work on my pictures, but in winter it is so lonesome. For days I do not see any one except father and mother or old Mrs. Leach."

"And who is Mrs. Leach?" asked Albert.

"Oh, she's a poor old soul who lives alone and works on the fish racks," answered Telly, "she is worse off than I am." It was a little glimpse into the girl's life that interested Albert, and in the light of what he knew of her history, a pathetic one. Truly she was alone in the world, and except for the two kindly souls who made a home for her, she had no one to turn to.

"You will go away to-morrow, I suppose," she said

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with a faint tone of regret as they were rowing home. "Father said your boat was coming after you to-day."

He looked at her a moment, while a slight smile showed beneath his mustache. "I suppose I shall have to," he answered, "but I should like to stay here a month. I've not made a sketch of your house, even."

"I wish you would," she said with charming candor, "it is so lonesome here, and then maybe you would show me a little about painting."

"Could you endure my company every day for a month?" he asked, looking her full in the face.

"I don't believe you could endure ours," she replied, dropping her eyes, and then she added quickly, "There is a prayer-meeting to-night at the Cape; would you like to go?"

"Most certainly," he answered; "I can imagine it will be interesting."

Albert had expected to see the "Gypsy" in the harbor when they returned that afternoon, but was most happily disappointed. "I hope they will stay at Bar Harbor a week," he thought. And that evening when Telly appeared, ready to be escorted to the prayer-meeting, he was certain that no fairer girl was to be found at Bar Harbor, or anywhere else.

She was dressed in simple white, her masses of

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sunny hair half concealed by a thin blue affair of loosely knitted wool, and had a cluster of wild roses at her throat. It was a new and pleasurable experience to be walking beside a well-dressed young man whose every look and word bespoke enjoyment of her society, and she showed it in her simple, unaffected way. "I am afraid we shall disturb the meeting," she said with a smile, as they were walking over to the village. "The folks will be so curious to know who you are they will sing worse than ever. That's about all they do," she added by way of explanation, — "sing a few hymns, and Deacon Oaks will make a prayer and Mr. Gates another. They may call on you to give testimony," she continued, looking at Albert archly; "will you respond?"

"Hardly," was the reply. "I always respect people's religious feelings, but I must confess I belong to the great majority of sinners who have never had a change of heart."

That evening's gathering was a unique one in Albert's experience, and the religious observances such as he never forgot. The place was a little square, unpainted building, not larger than a country schoolhouse, and when Telly and he entered and seated themselves on one of the wooden settees that stood in rows, not over a dozen people were there.

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On a small platform in front was a cottage organ, and beside it a small desk. A few more entered after they did, and then a florid-faced man arose, and, followed by a short and stout young lady, walked forward to the platform. The girl seated herself at the organ, and the man, after turning up the lamp on the organ, opened the book of gospel hymns, and said in a nasal tone, "We will naow commence our sarvices by singin' the forty-third psalm, and all are requested to rise an' jine." In the centre of the room hung a large lamp, and two more on brackets at the side shed a weak light on the gathering, but no one seemed to feel it necessary to look for the forty-third selection. Albert and Telly arose with the rest, and the girl at the organ began to chase the slow tune up and down the keys. Then the red-faced man started the singing, a little below the key, and the congregation followed. To Albert's surprise, Telly's voice, clear and distinct, at his side joined with the rest. A long prayer, full of halting repetitions, by the man at the desk, followed, and then another hymn, and after that came a painful pause. To Albert's mind it was becoming serious, and he began to wonder how it would end, when there ensued one of the most weird and yet pathetic prayers he had ever listened to. It was uttered by an old lady, tall,

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gaunt, and white-haired, who arose from the end of a settee close to the wall and beneath one of the smoke-dimmed lamps. It could not be classed as a prayer exactly, for when she began her utterance she looked around as if to find sympathy in the assembled faces, and her deep-set piercing eyes seemed alight with intense feeling. At first she grasped the back of the settee in front with her long fleshless fingers, and then later clasped and finally raised them above her upturned face, while her body swayed with the vehemence of her feelings. Her garb, too, lent a pathos, for it was naught but a faded calico dress that hung from her attenuated frame like the raiment of a scarecrow. It may have been the shadowy room or the mournful dirge of the near-by ocean that added an uncanny touch to her words and looks, but from the moment she arose until her utterance ceased, Albert was spell-bound. So peculiar, and yet so pathetic, was her prayer, it shall be quoted in full as uttered:

"O Lord," she said, "I come to Thee, knowin' I'm as a worm that crawls on the airth; like the dust blown by the winds; the empty shell on the shore, or the leaves that fall on the ground. I come poor an' humble. I come hungry and thirsty, like even the lowliest of the airth. I come and kneel at Thy feet — believin' that I, a poor worm o' the dust, will

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still have Thy love and pertection. I'm old, an' weary o' waitin'. I'm humble, and bereft o' kin. I'm sad, and none to comfort me. I eat the crust o' poverty, an' drink the cup of humility. My pertector and my staff have bin taken from me, and yet, for all these burdens Thou in Thy infinite wisdom hev seen fit to lay on me, I thank Thee! Thou hast led my feet among thorns and stuns, and yet I thank Thee. Thou hast laid the cross o' sorrow on my heart, and the burden o' many infirmities for me to bear, and yet I bless Thee, yea, verily shall my voice be lifted to glorify and praise Thee day and night, for hast Thou not promised me that all who are believers in Thy word shall be saved? Hast Thou not sent Thy son to die on the cross for my sake, poor and humble as I am? An' fer this, an' fer all Thy infinite marcy an' goodness to me, I praise an' thank Thee to-night, knowin' that not a sparrer falls without Thy knowin' it, and that even the hairs of our heads are numbered.

"I thank Thee, O Lord, for the sunshine every day, and the comin' o' the birds and flowers every season. I thank Thee that my eyes are still permitted to see Thy beautiful world, and my ears to hear the songs o' praise. I thank Thee, too, that with my voice I can glorify and bless Thee fer all Thy goodness, and fer

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all Thy marcy. An' when the day of judgment comes an' the dead rise up then I know Thou wilt keep Thy promise, an' that even I, poor an' humble, shall live again, jinin' those that have gone before, to sit at Thy feet an' glorify Thee for life everlastin'. Fer this blessed hope, an' fer all Thy other promises, I lift my voice in gratitude an' thankfulness an' praise to Thee, my heavenly Father, an' to thy son, my Redeemer, to-night an' to-morrer an' forever an' forever. Amen."

To Albert, a student of Voltaire, of Hume, of Paine, and an admirer of Ingersoll, a doubter of scriptural authenticity, and almost a materialist in belief, this weird and piteous utterance came with peculiar effect. That she who uttered it had only told the tale of her own sad life and hope he understood at once, and what was of more force, that she believed and felt in her own heart that every word of her recital was heard by her Creator. Albert had heard prayers and religious exhortations without number; prayers that were incoherent, pointless, vague, or uttered to the hearers instead of God; prayers that contained advice to the Deity galore, but of supplication and thankfulness not a vestige; but never before one that reached his heart and touched his feelings as the strange and piteous supplication uttered by this weird old lady there

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in the dimly-lighted room with the sad and solemn dirge of the ocean whispering through the open windows.

The rest of the services were of little interest to him, except the fact that Telly's voice at his side, now a little bolder than at first, led the gospel hymns that followed. Old and time-worn they were, and yet rendered with a zest of feeling reflected, maybe, from the plaintive prayer of this old lady.

Our moods, and more especially our thoughts, are often turned from one groove into another by some single word or reference that, like a little rudder at the stern of a great ship, seems of no account. To Albert, who for a year had had no thought except to win success amid the hard, selfish scramble of life in a busy city, this episode, and more especially the utter self-abnegation and piteous appeal of this poor, ill-clad, and gaunt-faced old lady, was the tiny rudder that changed his thoughts and carried him back to the many times when he, a boy, exuberant in spirit, was made to kneel each night at bed-time and listen to a loving mother's prayer. Then, too, the memory of that mother's face, and even the very tones of her voice as she prayed that God would guide her boy's footsteps aright, came back to him now, and into the remembrance too was woven all of that mother's

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kind and patient acts; all her earnest and good advice; all her self-denials; all the pinchings and small economies she had endured to enable him to receive an education, and as each and all came trooping back like so many little hands tugging at his heart-strings and moistening his eyes, he realized that there was needed in this hurrying, selfish life of ours something deeper, and something beyond the skepticism of Voltaire and the materialism of Ingersoll. And there in that dim little room, with two dozen poorly clad and simple fisher-folk singing gospel hymns to the accompaniment of a wheezy cottage organ, he realized that while atheism and doubt might appeal to his intellect, it did not satisfy his heart, and that while materialism might be a good enough theory to live by, it was a cheerless belief to die by.

And then too, as he stole covert looks at the fair girl who stood by his side, joining her sweet voice in "Hold the Fort," "Pull for the Shore," "Gathering at the River," and all the other time-worn gospel songs, older than he was, into his heart came the first feeling, also, that she was the one woman he had ever met whose gentle, unaffected goodness and purity of thought was worthy of any man's devotion. But words are given us to conceal as well as to reveal our feelings, and when the unique little prayer-meeting

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was concluded with an oddly spoken benediction by Deacon Oaks, and Albert and Telly were on their way back to the point, his first words bore no disclosure of his feelings.

"Who was the poor old lady that prayed so fervently?" he asked; "I have never heard anything like it since I was a boy."

"Oh, that's the Widow Leach," Telly responded; "she always acts that way and feels so too, I guess. She is an object of pity here, and very poor. She has no relation living that she knows of, lives alone in a small house she owns, and works on the fish racks summers, and winters has to be helped. Her husband and two sons were lost at sea many years ago, and father says religion is all the consolation she has left."

"Does she always pray as fervently as she did to-night?" was Albert's next query.

"Oh, yes, that's her way," was the answer; "father says she is a little cracked about such matters. He pities her, though, and helps her a good deal, and so does 'most every one else here who can. She needs it." Then after a pause she added, "How did you enjoy the meeting, Mr. Page?"

"Well," replied Albert slowly, and mentally contrasting it with many Sunday services when he had occupied a pew with the Nasons at their fashionable

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church in Boston, "it has been an experience I shall not soon forget. In one way it has been a pleasure, for it has taken me back to my young days." Then he added a little sadly, "It has also been a pain, for it recalled my mother and how she used to pray that I might grow to be a good man."

"You are not a bad man, are you?" responded Telly at once, looking curiously at him.

"Oh, no; I hope not," he answered, smiling, "I try to do as I would be done by, but the good people here might think I was, maybe, because I am not a professor of religion. For that reason I should be classed as one of the sinners, I presume."

"Well, so is father," responded Telly, "but that doesn't make him one. Deacon Oaks calls him a scoffer, but I know he trusts him in all money matters, and I think father is the best and kindest man in the world. He has been so good and kind to me I would almost lie down and die for him, if necessary."

It was an expression of feeling that was not surprising to Albert, knowing as he did her history, but he felt it unwise to discuss it. "How do you feel about this matter of belief?" he asked after a pause. "Are you what this old lady would call a believer, Miss Terry?"

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"Oh, no," she replied slowly, "I fear I am not. I always go to meeting Sundays when there is one, — mother and I, — and once in a while to the Thursday evening prayer-meeting. I think it's because I enjoy the singing."

When they reached the point Albert could not restrain his desire to enjoy the society of this unaffected, simple, and beautiful girl a little longer. The moon that Frank had planned to use was high overhead, and away out over the still ocean stretched a broadening path of silvery sheen, while at their feet, where the ground swells were breaking upon the rocks, every splash of foam looked like snow-white wool.

"If it's not asking too much, Miss Terry," said Albert with utmost politeness, "won't you walk out to the top of the cliff and sit down a few moments, while I enjoy a cigar? The night is too beautiful to turn away from at once."

Telly, nothing loath perhaps, assented, and they took possession of the rustic seat where Albert had listened to her history the night before. Perhaps a little of its pathos came to him now as he watched her sweet face while she gazed far out to seaward and to where the swells were breaking over a low, half-submerged ledge. And what a flood of new and

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bewitching emotions came to him as he watched his fair companion, all unconscious of his scrutiny! — and with them, a sudden and keen interest to unravel the mystery of her parentage, and the hope that some time he might do it. He also felt an unaccountable desire to tell her that he knew her pathetic story, and to express his interest in it and his sympathy for her, but dared not. "It may hurt her to know I know it," he thought, "and I will wait till she knows me better." Instead he began telling her about himself and his own early life, his home, his loss of parents, his struggle to earn a living, and how much success he had so far met. It may be considered egotism, but it was the wisest thing he could have done, for it awakened her interest in him far more than he realized. When his recital and cigar were both at an end and it was time to go in, he said: "I may not have another chance to ask you, Miss Terry, before I leave here; but when I get back to Boston may I write to you, and will you answer my letters if I do?"

The question startled her a little, but she answered:

"I shall be pleased to hear from you, Mr. Page, and will do the best I can in replying, only do not expect too much."

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When he had bade her good night and was alone in his room, the memory of Mrs. Leach and her pitiful prayer, coupled with Telly's pleading eyes and sweet face, banished all thoughts of sleep, and he had to light another cigar and watch the moonlit ocean for a half hour while he smoked and meditated.

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CHAPTER XXV

THE "GYPSY" RETURNS

"How did ye like the prayer-meetin'?" asked Uncle Terry the next morning, as Albert stood watching him getting ready to start on his daily rounds. "Did the Widder Leach make ye feel ye was a hopeless sinner?"

"It was an interesting experience," replied Albert, "and one I shall not soon forget."

"Oh, it don't do 'em no harm to git together an' pray an' sing, an' most likely it divarts their minds from other troubles, but in my way o' thinkin', prayin' is a good deal like a feller tryin' to lift himself by his boot-straps. It encourages him some, but he don't git much further." Then, as if a load was on his mind, he added, "You haven't thought o' no way ter git me out o' my scrape, hev ye?"

"I have thought a good deal about it," replied Albert, "and the best way, it seems to me, is for you to go right to Frye and tell him you can't afford to carry the case any further, and offer to pay whatever fee he

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sees fit to ask. You can tell him you will give up the case entirely, and ask him to return the proofs you want. I may decide to have a detective within hearing, so that if he refuses you these things, we can use the detective as a witness in a replevin suit. Most likely he will demand quite a sum, but it is best to pay it if we can get the proofs. I will advance money enough to cover what he is likely to ask. What I want you to do is to wait until he sends for more money; then come to me at once with the news."

Uncle Terry looked at Albert a moment, and suddenly grasping his hand, exclaimed, "I can't thank ye 'nough for yer offer to help me, but I kin say how sorry I am I distrusted ye at fust, and as long as I've a roof to cover my head, ye'r' sure to find a welcome under it, an' the latch-string allus out."

"I thank you for your kindly words, Mr. Terry," responded Albert, "and I am likely to avail myself of your invitation again before the summer is over. I expect my friends back to-day and must join them, but I assure you I would much prefer to stay here for the two weeks I have planned for my outing."

"Ye won't go till I see ye again, will ye?" asked Uncle Terry anxiously.

"No," was the answer. "If the 'Gypsy' shows up to-day we will stay in the harbor to-night, and I

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should like to have you and Miss Telly visit her." Then as the old man pushed off and pulled out of the cove with long slow strokes, Albert watched him with a new interest. "Poor old fellow," he thought, "he is honest as the day is long, and has a heart of gold beneath his blunt speech. How hard he has to work for what he gets, and what a vile thing it was in Frye to rob him so!" When the old man was out of sight Albert strolled over to the village. On the outer side of the harbor, and opposite where the houses were, he came to some long rows of slat benches, and busy at work spreading split fish upon them was the old lady who had thanked the Lord so fervently at the prayer-meeting. As she noticed Albert she paused and stood looking at him curiously. "Good morning, madam," he said as he neared her; "you have a nice day to dry your fish, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir; the Lord's bin good to me this summer," she answered, still eyeing him, and added quickly, "you be the young man from Bosting that's stopping with Uncle Terry, I consider? I seen ye at the meeting last night with Telly. Do you belong to the world's people, or hev ye made yer callin' and 'lection sure?"

It was rather a pointed query for so short an acquaintance, and Albert smiled. "I hope I have some

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chance of being saved at last," he replied, "but tell me, why do you ask? Do I look wicked?"

"Looks be mainly deceivin'," she answered, "but if your heart's with the Lord, you're sure o' salvation."

"You have a large lot of fish to care for, I see," he replied, not wishing to discuss religion with this odd old lady, "and it must keep you busy."

"I need it, for the winter's comin' an' then there's no work for me," she answered sadly, resuming her labor, "I'm counted as one o' the Lord's poor then."

Albert looked at the thin figure upon which hung a soiled and faded calico dress, and then at her white hair as she bent over her work, and the pitiful sight and the pathos of her words touched him. "If you are one of the Lord's poor of this village," he thought, "the Lord doesn't do much for you!" Then going to her and taking a ten-dollar bill out of his pocket he said kindly, "Miss Terry told me a little about you, Mrs. Leach, and for her sake I'm going to ask you to do me a favor. Here is a little money, and please accept it as coming from the Lord."

The old woman looked startled and as he held the money out, smiling kindly, her eyes filled with tears. "Your heart's in the right place and the Lord'll surely bless ye for yer goodness," she said as she took it, and then Albert, bidding her good morning, walked

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away. He little realized how soon that crust of bread, cast upon the waters, would return and bless him.

For an hour he strolled around the harbor, watching the men at work on boats or fishing-gear, and sniffing the salt-sea odor of the ocean breeze, and then returned to the point and began sketching the lighthouse. He was absorbed in that when he heard a sharp whistle, and looking up, there was the "Gypsy" just entering the harbor. He ran to the cove where he had left his boat, and by the time the yacht was anchored, had pulled alongside. To his surprise no one was aboard but Frank. "Where are the rest of the boys?" he asked, as that young man grasped his boat. Frank laughed. "Well, just about now they are playing tennis and calling 'fifteen love' and 'thirty love' with a lot of girls down at Bar Harbor. The fact is, Bert," he continued as Albert stepped aboard, "our gander cruise has come to an end. They ran into some girls they knew, and after that all the 'Gypsy' was good for was a place to eat and sleep in. I've run her up here and shall let you keep her with you until you get ready to go home. I'm going to cut stick for Bethlehem, and if I can get one of the girls to go with me, I may visit Sandgate."

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Albert laughed heartily. "Want to hear some one sing 'Ben Bolt' again?" he queried.

"Well, maybe," replied Frank; "the fact of the matter is, the whole trip has gone wrong from the start. You know what I wanted, but as it couldn't be, I did the next best thing and made up this party, and now the cruise has ended in a fizzle. The boys have got girl on the brain, and I am disgusted."

"No girl on your brain," observed Albert dryly.

"Well, that's different," was the evasive answer, and then he added suddenly, "By the way, where is the girl with the wonderful eyes you met here? What about girl on your brain?"

"Just now I imagine she's helping her mother in the house," answered Albert quietly; and then he added, "Well, what is the programme, and where are you going with the 'Gypsy'?"

"I want to be landed at the nearest port where I can reach a railroad," answered Frank, "and then you can do as you please with her. My skipper will do your bidding."

"What about the rest of the boys?" asked Albert.

"Well," replied Frank, "you can run to Bar Harbor and dance with the girls until the rest want to come back, or you can do as you please. The 'Gypsy' is yours as long as you want her, after I'm

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ashore. I think I'll run up to Bath and take the night train for the mountains, if there is one; if not, we will lie at Bath over night."

"I must go ashore and leave word I am coming back," said Albert; "the fact is, I've found a client in this Mr. Terry, and it's an important matter."

"So is the blue-eyed girl, I imagine," observed Frank with a droll smile. When the irrepressible owner of the 'Gypsy' had deserted her, Albert returned to the Cape and remained there for a week. How many little trips he induced his new-found friends to take on her during that time, how much gossip it created in the village, and how many happy hours he and Telly passed together, need not be told. The last day but one of his stay he invited everybody at the Cape, old or young, to go out on a short cruise, and nearly all accepted. Mrs. Leach, however, did not come, and when Albert asked Telly the reason she answered quietly, "It's because the poor old soul is ashamed of her clothes."

When the morning of his departure came Uncle Terry said, "I hope we'll see ye soon, Mr. Page, and ye'r' sure of a welcome here, so don't forget us," and then he pulled away on his daily round to his traps.

As it happened, when Albert was ready to start only Telly accompanied him to the cove where his

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boat was, and when she bade him good-by he noticed her voice trembled a little, and as he held her hand a moment, her face was turned away. When the yacht rounded the point she was there waving an adieu and remained there until lost from sight.

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CHAPTER XXVI

THE MISER IN HIS DEN

THE one point of pride in Nicholas Frye's nature was his absolute belief in his own shrewdness. "They can't get the best of me," he would say to himself when he had won an unusually knotty case, and winking one of his cat-like eyes he would say, half aloud, "I'm shrewd, I'm shrewd as the devil!" He knew he was both hated and feared by his fellow-members of the bar, but it mattered not to him. Being hated he didn't mind, and being feared flattered his vanity to an intense degree. When Uncle Terry put himself in his power and, like a good-natured old sheep, stood to be sheared, Frye only laughed at his client's stupidity and set out to continue the robbery as long as possible. Messrs. Thygeson & Company, of Stockholm, who had first employed him to hunt up an heir to the estate of old Eric Peterson, whose son Neils and his young wife had been lost on the coast of Maine, fared no better. To them he only stated that he had found several promising clues and was following them as rapidly as possible, but it all cost

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money, and would they kindly send a draft on account for necessary expenses? etc., etc. To shear them as close as possible and as long as he could before giving any return for their money was part of his game. All were fish that came to his net, and all were treated alike and robbed from start to finish. When Albert had turned his back upon him, and, worse than that, taken away his best client, as he afterwards learned, the old scoundrel suffered the worst blow to his vanity he ever received. "Curse the fellow!" he would say to himself. "I'll pay him and have revenge if I live long enough, and I'll never rest till I do. No man ever got the best of me, and in the long run no man ever shall!" Like an Indian he bided his time, though waiting and watching with his merciless yellow eyes until the chance might come when he could deal a ruinous blow.

But there is a Nemesis that follows evil-doers in this world, ready to strike with an invisible hand all who are lost to the sense of right and justice. In Frye's case the avenging goddess lurked in his inordinate belief in his own shrewdness, coupled with a fatuous love of speculation. A few lucky ventures at first in the stock market had fanned the flame until he believed he was as invincible in State Street as he was in Pemberton Square.

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Then along came a war-cloud in Europe; stocks began to drop and provisions to advance. September wheat was then selling in Chicago at ninety cents. Frye bought fifty thousand bushels on a margin. France and Germany growled, and wheat rose to ninety-four. Frye sold, clearing two thousand dollars. Then it dropped a cent, and Frye bought a hundred thousand bushels more. Once again the war-cloud grew black, and wheat rose to ninety-eight. The papers were full of wild rumors, and "The Wall Street Bugle" said wheat would look cheap at a dollar and a half inside of a month. Then it advanced to one dollar, and Frye lost his head. His holdings showed a profit of seven thousand dollars, and sudden riches stared him in the face. Once more the two bellicose foreign powers growled and showed their teeth. Wheat rose another cent, and Frye doubled his holdings. Then the powers that had growled smiled faintly, and in one day wheat fell to ninety-three and remained there. Frye's holdings now showed a net loss of eight thousand dollars, and he kicked the office boy out, locked the door in Pemberton Square, and from ten till three watched the quotations in State Street until wheat fell to ninety, and then he began to look around to raise more money. He had now put up over sixteen thousand dollars, and wheat was still

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falling. At every drop of a cent he was called upon for two thousand dollars. Day by day it vibrated, now going up a cent, and then dropping two, and when Uncle Terry and Albert were discussing how to checkmate his further robbing of the lighthouse keeper, he was, with muttered curses, watching his ill-gotten gains vanish to the tune of many thousand dollars per diem. He neglected his business, went without his meals, and forgot to shave. He had mortgaged his real estate for twenty thousand, and that was nearly gone. Wheat was now down to eighty, and France and Germany were shaking hands. Frye was caught in a trap of his own setting and could not sleep nights. His margins were almost exhausted, and his resources as well. He had put up forty thousand dollars, and if wheat fell three cents more, it would be all swept away. Then he executed a second mortgage at high interest and waited. It was the last shot in his locker, and all that stood between him and ruin; but wheat advanced two cents and he began to hope. He had absolutely ignored business for two weeks that had been one long stretch of misery, and now he went to work again. To collect the little due him and raise all the money he could was his sole thought. He wrote to Thygeson & Company that he had at last found the heir they were in search of, and

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described what proofs he held, at the same time stating that on receipt of his fee of a thousand dollars all and sufficient proofs of identity of the claimant would be forwarded. Then he wrote to Uncle Terry and demanded three hundred more. September wheat had now fallen to seventy-eight.

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CHAPTER XXVII

IN SHADY WOODS

BLANCH NASON, Frank's younger sister, was his good friend and sympathizer, and in all the family discussions had usually taken his part. His elder sister, Edith, was like her mother, rather arrogant and supercilious, and considered her brother as lacking in family pride, and liable to disgrace them by some unfortunate alliance. It was to Blanch he always turned when he needed sympathy and help, and to her at Bethlehem he appeared the day after he had left the "Gypsy." His coming surprised her not a little.

"Why, what has brought you here, Frank?" she asked. "I thought you were having high jinks down in Maine on the yacht, and playing cards every night with your cronies!"

"Oh, that is played out," he answered. "The boys are at Bar Harbor, having a good time. Bert is at a little unheard-of place saying sweet things to a pretty girl he found there, and I got lonesome, so I

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came up here to see you and get you to help me," he added slyly.

"I thought so," answered Blanch, laughing; "you never did come to me unless you wanted help. Well, who is the girl now, and what do you want?"

Frank looked surprised.

"How do you know it is a girl?" he asked.

"It usually is with you," she answered, eyeing him curiously. "So out with it. What's her name?"

"Alice Page," he replied.

"What, the girl you wanted us to invite to go on the yacht?" asked Blanch.

"That's the one," he replied, "and, as you know, she wouldn't come."

"Which shows her good sense," interrupted Blanch. "Well, what can I do in the matter?"

"Much, if you want to, and nothing, if you don't," he answered. "The fact is, sis, I want you to pack a trunk, and go with me to call on her. She is mighty proud, and I imagine that is why she turned the cold shoulder on my efforts to get her to come to Boston and meet you all. Now, if you go there, if only for one night, the ice will be broken, and of course you will invite her to visit you, and all will go well."

"A nice little scheme," responded Blanch, "but what will mamma and Ede say, do you think?"

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"Oh, never mind them," answered the plotter; "they need never know it. Just tell them you are going to Saratoga with me for a few days. We will go there, if you like, only we will stop off at Sandgate on the way. Now do this for me, sis, and I'll buy you the earth when Christmas comes!"

"Well, you will have to stay here until Monday," said Blanch, "and be real nice to mamma and Edie all the time, or I can't fix it. Lucky for you, Master Frank, that they are out driving now!"

"But why must we wait four days?" asked Frank petulantly.

"Because, my love-lorn brother," she replied, "in the first place I don't want to miss the Saturday-night hop, and then we are booked for a buck-board ride to the Flume to-morrow. Another reason is, I mean to pay you for turning your back on us and going off on the 'Gypsy.'"

That afternoon our eager suitor wrote Alice the longest letter she had ever received, for it consisted of nine full pages. As most of it can easily be imagined, there is no need to quote it; suffice it to say that it was received with some pleasure and a little vexation by Alice.

"Mr. Nason and his sister are coming here Monday," said she to Aunt Susan, "and we must put on our

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best bib and tucker, I suppose. But how we can contrive to entertain his sister is beyond me." Nevertheless, she was rather pleased at the prospective visitation, for in a measure it was a vindication of her own position. Then again as her school had been closed for over a month, her daily life was becoming decidedly monotonous. When Albert had written regarding the invitation the Nasons had extended, she believed it was due solely to Frank's influence, and when that young man tried to obtain her consent to join a yachting-party, providing his mother and sister decided to go, she was morally sure of it. But it made no difference, for if the supposedly aristocratic Mrs. Nason had sent her a written invitation she was the last person in the world to accept it. To so go out of her way for the possible opportunity of allowing the only son of a rich family to pay court to her was not characteristic of Alice Page. Rather a thousand times would she teach school in single blessedness all her life than be considered as putting herself in the way of a probable suitor. Of her own feelings toward Frank she was not at all sure. He was a good-looking young fellow and no doubt stood well socially. At first she had felt a little contempt for him, due to his complaints that he had hard work to kill time. When she received the letter announcing

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his determination to study law and become a useful man in the world she thought better of him. When he came up in June it became clear that he was decidedly in love with her, for none of Mother Eve's daughters are ever long in doubt on that point. So self-evident were his feelings that she at that time felt compelled to avoid giving him a chance to express them. Her heart was and always had been entirely free from the pangs of love, and while his devotion was in a way quite flattering, the one insurmountable barrier was his family. Had he been more diplomatic he would never have told her his mother frowned at him when he danced twice with a poor girl; but unwisely he had; and to a girl of Alice's pride and penetration, that was enough. "I am a poor girl," she thought, when he made the admission, "but I'll wear old clothes all my life before his haughty mother shall read him a lecture for dancing twice with me."

Ever since the day Mrs. Mears had related the village gossip to her, she had thought a good many times about the cause of it, but to no one had she ever mentioned the matter since. Her only associate, good-natured Abby Miles, had never dared to speak of it, and Aunt Susan was wise enough not to, for which Frank ought to have been grateful, and no doubt would have been, had he known it. Now that

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he and his fashionable sister were coming to Sandgate Alice felt a good deal worried. Firstly, she knew her own stock of gowns was inadequate — no young woman, especially if she be pretty, enjoys being overshadowed by another in the matter of dress, and Alice was no exception. While not vain of her looks, — and she had ample reason to be, — she yet felt his sister would consider her countrified in dress, or else realize the truth that she was painfully poor. She had made the money her brother gave her go as far as possible — that was not far. Her own small salary was not more than enough to pay current expenses, and had he known how hard she had contrived to make one dollar do the work of two he would have pitied her. When the day and train arrived, and she had ushered her two guests into their rooms, her worry began. A trunk had come, and as she busied herself to help Aunt Susan get supper under way before she changed her dress, she was morally sure Miss Nason would appear in a gown fit for a state dinner. But when she was dressed and went out on the porch where her guests were, she found Miss Blanch attired in a white muslin, severe in its simplicity. It was a pleasant surprise, and then the matter of dress no longer troubled her, for at no time during their stay did Alice feel any reason to consider herself poorly clad

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in comparison. Of the conversation that evening, so little was said that is pertinent to this narrative that only a few utterances deserve space. Alice had the happy faculty of finding out what subjects her guests were most interested in and kept them talking upon them. Blanch gave an interesting description of her life at the Maplewood; who were there, what gowns the ladies wore; the hops, drives, tennis, croquet, and whist games; and when that topic was exhausted Alice turned to Frank and said, "Now tell us about your trip."

"There is not much to tell," he answered in a disappointed tone. "The fact is my yachting-trip was a failure from start to finish. I hoped to induce mother and the girls to go, and to coax you to join us, but that plan failed. Then I made up a party of fellows and started. Two of them played banjos, and that, with singing, fishing, and cards, I thought would make a good time. I had a two weeks' trip all mapped out, no end of stores on board, and anticipated lots of fun; but it didn't materialize. The second day Bert got left on the island, and we didn't find him until the next day. In the meantime he had found a pretty girl and acted as if he had become smitten with her. Then we ran to Bar Harbor, and the rest of the boys found some girls they knew, and decided at once that

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a gander cruise had lost its charms; so I threw up my hands, and you know the rest. I turned the 'Gypsy' over to Bert, and for all I know or care he is using her to entertain his island fairy. I hope so, anyhow. But I've got the merry ha-ha on him all right, and if he ever rings the changes on a certain subject, he'll hear it, too." What that certain subject was Alice did not see fit to ask, but joined with Blanch in a good laugh at Frank's dolorous description of his trip and its Waterloo at the hands of a few girls.

"It seems you can't get along without us much despised creatures," observed Blanch, "and if you had come to Bethlehem in the first place you would have had a good time. There were no end of pretty girls at the Maplewood, and eligible Romeos were scarce as white crows."

"I never said I could get along without girls," replied Frank, a little piqued, "only I wanted girls to go on my yacht, that was all."

"And as the mountain wouldn't come to Mahomet," put in Blanch, "why, Mahomet came to Bethlehem."

When the chit-chat slowed down Alice said, "I don't know how to entertain you two good people in this dull place, though I want to very much. There are mountains and woods galore and lots of pretty

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drives. And," looking at Frank, "I know where there is a nice mill-pond full of lilies, and an old moss-covered mill, and a miller that looks like a picture in story books. There is also a drive to the top of the mountain, where the view is simply grand. I have a steady-going and faithful old horse, and we will go wherever you like."

"Do not worry about me, Miss Page," replied Blanch, "if I can see mountain, and woods, I am perfectly happy."

When the evening was nearing its close Frank begged Alice to sing, but she at first declined.

"Do you play or sing, Miss Nason?" she asked cautiously.

"Oh, please don't be afraid of me," was the answer, "I never touched a piano in my life. Once in a while I join in the chorus, as they say, for my own amusement and the amazement of others, but that is all."

It wasn't all, for she played the guitar and sang sweetly, but kept that talent to herself on this occasion. Finally Alice was persuaded to open the piano, and then out upon the still night air there floated many an old-time ballad. After that she played selections from a few of the latest light operas that Frank had sent her, and then turned away. "Oh, don't stop now," exclaimed both her guests at once, "sing

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a few more songs." Then with almost an air of proprietorship Frank arose, and going to the piano searched for and found a well-worn song. Without a word he opened and placed it on the music rack. It was "Ben Bolt"! A faint color rose in Alice's face, but she turned and played the prelude without a word. When she had sung the first verse, to her surprise Blanch was standing beside her, and joined her voice in the next one. When it was finished, Frank insisted on a repetition, and after that all three sang a dozen more of the sweet old-time songs, so familiar to all. Then Alice left the room to bring in a light lunch, and Frank seized the opportunity to say, "Well, sis, what do you think?"

"I think," she replied, "that you were foolish to go yachting at all. If I had been you I should have come up here in the first place, stayed at the hotel, and courted her every chance I could. I am in love with her myself, and we haven't been here six hours."

To her surprise Frank stepped up to her quickly and, taking her face in his hands, kissed her.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

WHERE THE LILIES GROW

Two days of Alice's visitation passed like a summer breeze. The first day they drove to the old mill and spent the entire forenoon gathering lilies and watching the great wheel that dripped and clattered between its moss-grown walls. It was a curiosity to Blanch, for never in her life had she seen one of those old-time landmarks, now so rare. That afternoon they drove to the mountain's top and saw the sunset, only to be late home to Aunt Susan's tea biscuit and cold chicken, and having a surprising appetite. The next day they made a picnic trip to another mountain, leaving the horse half way up and walking the rest of the way. At noon they returned, and beside a cold spring that bubbled beneath a rock they opened their lunch baskets. Then they picked flowers, hunted for wintergreen, and decked the horse and wagon with ferns and wreaths of laurel, — only simple country pleasures, it is true, but they at least had the charm of newness for two of the party. That even-

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ing they sang all sorts of songs, from gospel hymns to comic operas, and Blanch showed in so many ways that she admired her new-found friend that there was no further restraint.

"I wish you would stay with me until my school begins, Blanch," said Alice at the close of the evening. "If you knew how lonely I am, I am sure you would."

"I might be persuaded to make a longer visit next summer," was the answer, "if you will return this visit next winter; will you?"

"I won't promise now," answered Alice, "I am afraid I should be out of place in your society. I'm only a country girl, you know."

"I shall feel hurt if you don't," responded Blanch.

When two girls who have known one another but four days begin using each other's first names, it may be considered that they are growing fond of each other. It was so in this case, and the remark that Blanch had made the first evening to her brother was sincere.

In the goodness of her heart she had also refrained from wearing her best frocks, fearing that Alice might feel herself overshadowed, and that is an act of consideration of which few of the fair sex are capable.

"I should like to see that schoolhouse Frank has

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spoken of several times," she said a little later, "and that barefoot girl he told about."

It was the first allusion to his interest in her that Blanch had made, and Alice colored; a trifle that did not escape her friend's eye.

"We will drive by where that girl lives to-morrow," responded Alice, "and if you like, will call and see her. It would please her mother very much, and really the girl is worth it. She is the most original little old woman in my school."

The next morning when Frank and his sister were alone for a few moments she said, "I am going to do you a good turn to-day, Sir Mahomet, and have a headache," and, laughing a little, "if you are wise you will improve your opportunities and persuade your 'Sweet Alice' to go after pond lilies and leave me here. I noticed a most charming spot for a *tête-à-tête* on one side of that pond the other day, and I guess you can find it if you try. It's a mossy bank under a big tree, and out of sight of the old mill." Was ever brother blessed with a better sister!

But the wary Alice was not to be caught so easily.

"I could not think of going after lilies," she replied when he proposed the trip, "and leaving your sister alone; and then it is almost too warm to be out in the sun this morning. If she feels better this after-

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noon we will go there when the sun gets part way down."

When Blanch obtained a chance she said to her brother with a wise look, "Now I know why you couldn't coax your pretty schoolma'am to come to Boston. She's too keen to walk into any trap, and I like her all the better for it. But leave the matter to me. I'll give you a chance, and when you see it, seize it quick, talk fast, and don't be afraid. She won't allow herself to be left long alone with you while I am here."

True to her sisterly interest, Blanch kept quiet all the morning and after dinner was the first to propose another trip to the lily pond. "I am in love with that old mill," she said, "and I want to see it when the sun gets down so it will be shady there."

When they reached the spot she at once developed an unusual interest in the mill and began an animated conversation with the miller regarding it and all its history.

"You two go after the lilies," she said when Frank had the boat ready, "and leave me here. I'm afraid the sun on the water will bring back my headache."

A wee little frown crept over the face of Alice, for she saw through the plot, but she answered gayly, "All right, only your smiles will be wasted on the

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miller. He is too old to appreciate them. We won't be gone long," she added as she stepped into the boat. She surmised that Blanch's headache was a ruse instigated by her admirer, and this sudden interest in the mill's history only another, and, on guard ever, determined to check any and all serious words from him. And now what spirit of mischief had come over her? She joked and jested on all manner of subjects — the boat, his rowing, Blanch's interest in the miller, and her blue eyes sparkled with roguish intent. She bared one round arm to the elbow, and pulling every bud and blossom she could reach, pelted her cavalier with them.

"Did you learn that stroke at college," she asked, when one of his oars slipped and he nearly fell backwards, "or is that the way a yachtsman always rows?"

In response to all this he said but little, for he was thinking how best to say what was on his mind. He had resolved to declare himself at the first chance, and now that he had one his heart was like to fail him. When he reached the spot Blanch had referred to he headed the boat for the shore and as it came to a stop he said, "Let's get out and sit on the bank, Miss Page. I want to rest."

"Oh, we must not stop," answered his tormentor; "it's almost sundown, and besides, I want more lilies."

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She made no move to arise, but kept prodding a lily pad in the water beside her with one taper finger. By some chance, too, her broad sun-hat was well down over her face. Frank was silent while he looked at the piquant figure with half-hidden face and bare arm, sitting so near him. One little foot peeped out beneath her dress, one hand held fast to the boat while the other toyed with the green pad, and back of her lay the still pond dotted with countless blossoms. Only the tip of her nose could be seen, and beneath it two red lips about which lingered a roguish smile.

His heart beat a little faster, and almost did it fail him.

"Won't you get out, Miss Page?" he asked at last, rather doggedly. "I've something I want to say to you and — and it's nice to sit in the shade and talk."

The break had come and she could evade him no longer. Without a word or even a look she arose and, taking his proffered hand, stepped out of the boat. And strange to say, he retained that moist hand as if to lead her to a seat. Only a few steps up a mossy bank offered its temptation, and with quick gallantry he drew his coat off and spread it for her to sit upon.

"It's nice and cool here," she said, "but we must not stay long. Blanch will be waiting."

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In a way it was an unwise speech, for it recalled his sister's warning to talk fast and not be afraid. As is usual with most lovers, he had thought many times of what he would say, and how he would say it; but now that the critical moment had come, his well-chosen words vanished. He had remained standing, and for a moment looked at Alice as she sat with hat-hidden face, and than his heart-burst came.

"Miss Page," he said in a low voice, "you must know what I want to say and — and I've come all the way from Maine to say it, and can you — is there any hope for me in your feelings? Is there just a little?"

He paused, but no answer came, only her head sank a trifle lower and now even the tip of her chin was invisible beneath the hat. It may be the movement emboldened him, for in an instant he was beside her on the ground and had one hand a prisoner.

"Tell me, Alice," he pleaded, "is there any chance for me? Say just one word — only one! Say 'yes'!"

The prisoned hand was at his lips now, and then she raised her face and oh, divine sight! those blue eyes were filled with tears!

One instant flash of heaven only, and then a change came. Almost had she yielded, but not quite, for now she arose quickly and turning away said half

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petulantly, "Oh, please don't speak of that now and spoil our visit. Let us go back to the mill."

But still he held the little hand, and as she tried to draw it away he said pitifully: "Do you mean it, Alice? Is it no? Oh, don't let me go away without one word of hope!"

Then she raised her one free arm, and resting it against a nearby tree pressed her face upon it and almost whispered, "Oh, don't ask me now! I can't say 'yes' and I can't say 'no'!"

"I shall believe that your heart says 'yes,'" he responded quickly, slipping one arm around her waist, "and until you do say 'no' I shall keep on loving you just the same."

But he had not won her yet, for she drew herself away, and turning a piteous face toward him exclaimed, "Don't, please, say another word now, or I shall hate myself as long as I live if you do!"

For one moment he stood dumfounded, and then it all dawned upon him. "Forgive me, sweet Alice," he said softly, "for speaking too soon. I believe I know why you feel as you do, and I shall go away hoping that in time you will come to know my mother better. And since you have said that you can't say 'no,' I shall anticipate that some time it will be 'yes.' Now we will go and gather lilies."

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Then as he led her to the boat once more his arm stole around her waist, and this time she did not try to escape its pressure.

When two days afterward the brother and sister were ready to depart, Blanch put one arm caressingly around Alice and whispered, "Now remember, you have promised to make me a visit next winter, and you must keep your promise."

And poor Romeo, standing by, had to look the love that was in his heart while he envied his sister her parting kiss.

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CHAPTER XXIX

A FRIEND AT COURT

WHEN Frank and his sister were away from Sandgate she said, "Well, my dear Ben Bolt, did you capture your sweet Alice that afternoon I told so many fibs to help you? I know you must have made an effort, for she showed it plainly."

"No, I did not," he answered frankly, "but I made a break, and as she didn't take it amiss, I feel hopeful. The fact is, sis," he continued ruefully, "she is the most proud-spirited girl I ever met, and mother is the ogre that stands in the way. If mother approves of Alice I am all right, but if she doesn't receive her with open arms, it's all day with me."

"I could have told you that the day after we arrived there," answered Blanch, "and I am not surprised. Now" — with a laugh — "you must court mamma for a few months, as well as your pretty Alice. It will do you good, for you never have been over-dutiful."

Frank frowned. "Oh, bother these finicky moth-

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ers!" he exclaimed. "Why will they turn up their noses at every poor girl? If Alice had rich parents she would be all right, no matter if she were as homely as a hedge fence."

"Maybe that's so," answered Blanch, "but you can't change mamma, and if you want to win your Alice you must do as I tell you and court mamma. Now I will tell you what to do, and if you're good to me I'll help you do it. In the first place you must stay at Bethlehem until we go home, and do all you can to please your mother. Take her driving, ask her to play whist with you, and when she makes a good play, praise it; carry her wraps for her; be solicitous about her welfare and comfort in all things, and treat her just as if she were Alice instead of mamma. It won't be as pleasant, but it will be good practice for you. Then when she is well cared for, act downcast at times and depressed. Wait a few days before working the melancholy act — that's enough to provoke her interest — and don't say much to other girls. Dance with Ede and me and say sweet things to mamma for a week. Then some day take her out for a drive and act as if you had lost your last friend. She will inevitably ask what ails you; but don't tell her too quickly — let her coax you a little, and after a while make a clean breast of it.

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"I would suggest you insinuate the girl has favored your suit, but has practically said 'no,' because she is too proud to marry into a rich family. That will do more to pique mamma's interest in the matter than volumes of praise for Alice. Don't say too much, but if she questions you about her, answer frankly to the point, but convey the impression that you consider your case hopeless, and leave the rest to me."

Frank looked at his sister in silent admiration. "I didn't know you had such a wise head on your shoulders," he said at last, "or cared so much for me."

It was a nice thing to say, and well deserved, for few brothers ever do have better sisters than Frank was blessed with; and if more impetuous young men would make confidants of their mothers or sisters in matters matrimonial, and heed their advice, there would be fewer divorces.

When Frank and Blanch had made a short stop at Saratoga, "just to be able to say so," as Blanch said, they returned to Bethlehem and the little domestic drama began. At first it was not much to Frank's liking, but as it progressed he grew interested in watching the surprising effect it had on his proud mother. To have her only son, and a handsome young fellow at that, show her so much devotion

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before crowds of people, gladdened her heart in a wonderful way, and as it was soon noticed and commented upon to her, it flattered her amazingly. She had known that Frank was from the first a little smitten with this sister of his college chum; but as he had had several mild cases of being smitten before, she thought nothing of it. With wise motherly caution, she took good care to ask no questions, even when Blanch told her they had visited Alice on their way to Saratoga. When the denouement came she was, as Blanch had predicted, completely taken aback. It was a decidedly new experience to her to learn that any girl could turn her back upon her son's suit because he came from a wealthy and aristocratic family. While it surprised her a good deal, it also awakened her admiration for that girl still more. The one dread of her life had been that her impetuous son would make an unfortunate alliance and disgrace the family. She made but little reply to his lovelorn tale, except to laugh at him and assure him he would soon overcome it; but that night in the privacy of her room she questioned Blanch in a sly way very amusing to that shrewd daughter.

"Frank has not made me his confidant," Blanch replied, "only I noticed he was very attentive to Miss Page, while she seemed to avoid being left

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alone with him a moment. She is one of the sweetest and prettiest girls I've met in a long time, and also one of the proudest. I quite fell in love with her at sight, and am sure Frank has; but so far as I saw, she gave him no encouragement. She is poor, pretty, and proud; and that tells the whole story. I imagined she believed she would not be welcomed by you, and while I begged her to come and visit me, I doubt if she does." (A fib.)

This practically ended the first part of the play, though Frank noticed his mother watched him more closely and showed an increased tenderness towards him.

"Keep on courting mamma," Blanch whispered to him one evening when they were alone, "she is watching you to see if you mean it, and is both surprised and pleased. As I expected, she has quizzed me, and if you convince her you are in earnest, and are really the discarded and forlorn lover you affect to be, it will end by her writing your sweet Alice a personal letter of invitation to visit us. Seriously, too, I believe that will be the only thing that will bring your schoolma'am to Boston, or at least to our house."

When the last of August came and the Nasons returned to Boston, Frank and his mother were far

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better friends, and the most surprised one of the four was Edith, who was not in the secret.

"What has come over Frank?" she said to Blanch one day; "he has never been so well-behaved before in his life. First he quit idling and began to study law as if he meant to be somebody; then he deserted his crowd of cronies for us and has acted as if we were his sole care in life ever since! What is the meaning of it, Blanch?"

"I haven't the least idea," answered that arch plotter, "and it seems so good to have him devoted to us that I am not going to ask any questions. I am not disposed to act as foolish as the boy did who cut his drum open to find out what made the noise, or to find out what Frank's reasons are for doing what he ought to do, and I would advise you not to." All of which goes to show that far-seeing Blanch was capable of managing her mother and sister equally well.

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CHAPTER XXX

NEMESIS

"And round and round the caldron
The weird passions dance,
And the only god they worship
Is the mystic god of chance."

THE last day of August dawned fair in busy Boston. Summer sojourners were returning. John Nason's store was filled with new fall styles; the shoppers were crowding the streets, and the hustling, bustling life of a great city was at flood tide. Albert Page, full of business, was in his office, and Frank Nason was studying hard again, cheered by a new and sweet ray of hope. Small fortunes were being won and lost on State Street, and in one smoke-polluted broker's office Nicholas Frye sat watching the price of wheat. The September option opened that day at seventy-eight and one-quarter, rose to seventy-nine, fell to seventy-six and seven-eighths, rose to seventy-eight and then dropped back to seventy-six. He had margined his holdings to seventy-one, and if it fell to that

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price his sixty thousand dollars would be gone and he — ruined. For many nights he had had but little sleep, and that made hideous by dreams filled with the unceasing whir and click, click, click of the ticker. At times he had dreamed that a tape-like snake with endless coils was twining itself about him. He was worn and weary with the long nervous strain and misery of seeing his fortune slowly clipped away by the clicker's tick that had come to sound like the teeth of so many little devils snapping at him. To let his holdings go, he could not, and, lured on and on by the broker's daily uttered assertion that "wheat *could* not go much lower, but must have a rally soon," he had kept putting up margins. Now all he could possibly raise was in the broker's hands, and when that was gone, all was lost.

Frye sat and watched the blackboard where the uneven columns of quotations looked like so many little legs ever growing longer. Around him were a score of other men — no, insane fools — watching the figures that either made them curse their losses or gloat over their gains. No one spoke to another; no one cared whether another won or lost in the great gambling game that daily ruins its thousands.

It was the caldron filled with lies, false reports, fictitious sales, and the hope and lust of gain that

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boiled and bubbled, heated by the fires of hell. And ever around that caldron the souls of men were circling, cursing their losses and gloating over their gains.

And Frye was muttering curses.

At eleven o'clock wheat stood at seventy-five and one-half; at eleven-thirty, seventy-four and seven-eighths; at twelve, seventy-four.

Frye arose, and going to a nearby room, all mirrors and plate-glass, called at the bar for brandy. Two full glasses he tossed off like so much water, and then returned to his watching.

Wheat was seventy-three and three-quarters!

But the fickle goddess of chance loves to sport with her victims, and wheat rose to seventy-five again; then fell to seventy-four, and vibrated between that and seventy-five for an hour. Frye was growing desperate, and his deep-set yellow eyes glared like those of a cat at night. The market closed at two. It was now one-thirty, and wheat was seventy-three and three-quarters.

Frye went out again, and two more glasses of brandy were added to his delirium.

Wheat was now seventy-three and one-half!

Then, as once more he fixed his vulture eyes on that long column of figures, at the foot of which was

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seventy-three and one-half, the devil's teeth began a more vicious snapping, and so fast came the quotations that the boy could no longer record them. Instead, he called them out in a drawling sing-song:

"September wheat now seventy-three, — the half, — five-eighths, — a half, — five-eighths split, — now a half, — three-eighths, — a quarter, — seventy-three!" Frye set his feet hard together, and clinched his hands. Only two cents in price stood between him and the loss of all his twenty years' saving. All the lies he had told for miserable gain, all the miserly self-denial he had practised, all the clients he had cheated and robbed, all the hatred he had won from others availed him not. His contemptible soul and his life, almost, now hung by a miserly two cents.

Once more the devil's teeth clicked, and once more the boy's drawl rose above the ticker's whir.

"Seventy-three, — a quarter, — an eighth, — seventy-three, — now seventy-two seven-eighths, — three-quarters, — five-eighths, — three-quarters split, — now five-eighths, — a half, — a half."

And now pandemonium was raging in the Chicago wheat pit, and the ticker's teeth clicked like mad.

"Seventy-two, — a half, — a half, — three-eighths, — a half, — three-eighths, — a quarter, — seventy-two!"

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Cold beads of sweat gathered on Frye's forehead. One cent more and he was ruined!

Again the ticker buzzed like a mad hornet, and again the devil's teeth snapped.

"September wheat now seventy-one seven-eighths, — seven-eighths, — three-quarters, — seven-eighths split, — now the three-quarter, — five-eighths, — a half, — a half, — five-eighths, — a half, — a half again, — three-eighths, — a quarter, — an eighth, — a quarter, — an eighth, — a quarter, — an eighth, — an eighth, — a quarter split, — an eighth, —

"SEVENTY-ONE!!!"

FRYE WAS RUINED.

He gave one low moan, the first, last, and only one during those three long weeks of agony!

A few who sat near heard it, but did not even look at him, so lost were they to all human feeling. The devil's teeth kept snapping, the endless coils of tape kept unwinding; the boy continued his drawl, but Frye paid no heed. Only those spider-legs on the wall seemed kicking at him, and that fatal seventy-one, one, one kept ringing in his ears. He arose, and staggered out into that palace of glass again and swallowed more brandy. Then jostling many, but seeing no one, he, with bowed head, made his way to his office, opened, entered, and locked the door, and sat down.

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Whir-r-r-r-r!!!

Click, click, click!!!

Seventy-one, one, one! It was the last he heard, and then he sank forward on his desk in a drunken stupor.

At this moment Uncle Terry, with Frye's letter in his pocket, and righteous wrath in his heart, was speeding toward Boston as fast as steam could carry him.

The clear incisive strokes of an adjacent clock proclaiming midnight awoke Frye. He raised his head, and in that almost total darkness for a moment knew not where he was. Then, ere the echoes of those funeral knells died away, he arose, lit the two gas-jets, and sat down.

Seventy-one, one, one!!

They brought it all back to him, and now, alone in his misery, he groaned aloud, and with his despair came the dread of the morrow, when he, the once proud and defiant man, must go forth crushed, broken, despairing, penniless!

All would know it, and all would rejoice. Out of the many that hated or feared him, not one would feel a grain of pity, and well he knew it. He could almost see the looks of scorn on their faces, and hear them say, "Glad of it! Served him right, the old reprobate!"

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Then his past life came back to him. He had never married, and since he had looked down upon his dead mother's face, no woman's hand had sought his with tenderness. All his long life of grasping greed had been spent in money-getting and money-saving. No sense of right or justice had ever restrained him; but only the fear of getting caught had kept him from downright stealing. Year after year he had added to his hoard, carefully invested it, and now in a few days of desperate dread it had all been swept away!

Then perhaps the memory of that mother, as he had seen her last, with pallid face and folded arms, brought to him the first and only good impulse he ever felt, for he took a pen and wrote a brief but valuable letter. Then he went to his tall safe, opened both doors, and taking a small, flat packet from an inner till, returned to his desk, placed that and the letter in one long envelope, and sealed and directed it.

And now all the misery and despair of his situation returned with intense force, and as it crushed him down, obliterating every vestige of hope, once more his head sank forward on the desk and he groaned aloud. For a long time he remained thus, living over the past three weeks of agony, and then there smote upon his tortured nerves the sound of many clocks striking one. It sounded as if they were mocking

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him, and from far and near — some harsh and sharp, some faint in the distance — came that fatal one, one, one! He arose and, going to a small locker in his room, grasped a half-filled bottle of liquor and drank deeply. It only made matters worse, for now an uncanny delirium crept into his rum-charged brain and he fancied himself looking into an open grave and there, at the bottom, lay a wasted woman's body, the face shrunken and pallid and teeth showing in mocking grin. Then he seemed to be lying there himself, looking up, and peering down at him were the faces of many men, some bearing the impress of hate, and some of derisive laughter.

And one was Albert Page, with a look of scorn.

He arose again, and taking a letter-opener, crowded bits of paper into the keyhole of the door and up and down the crack. Then he closed the one window, turned out the two gas-jets, and opened the stop-cocks again. An odor of gas soon pervaded the room into which came only a faint light from the State House dome. And now a more hideous hallucination came to that hopeless, despairing man, for between the open doors of his tall safe stood the wasted form of his mother! Her gray hair was combed flat on either side of her ashen face, a gray dress covered her attenuated frame, and her arms were folded cross-wise

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over her bosom as he had seen her last, but now her eyes were wide open, yellow, and glassy. Then slowly, very slowly, she seemed to move toward him, her eyes fixed on his, piercing his very soul. Nearer, nearer, nearer she came, until now, rising above him, she stooped as if to touch his lips with the kiss of death. He could not breathe or move, conscious only that an awful horror was upon him and a tiny mallet beating on his brain.

Then that hideous, deathly, pallid face, cold and clammy, was pressed upon his, the faint light seemed to fade into darkness, and he knew no more.

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CHAPTER XXXI

THE GLAD HAND

ALBERT PAGE had just finished reading his morning mail the first day of September, when his office door opened and he saw the genial face of Uncle Terry enter.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Albert, springing to his feet and advancing to meet his caller. "How are you, Uncle Terry?" Then, as he seized that man's hand in both of his, and shook it heartily, he added in one breath, "How is your good wife and Telly, and when did you arrive, and why didn't you let me know so I could meet you?"

"Wal," answered Uncle Terry, seating himself, "I got in purty late last night an' put up at a taverr near the depo."

"But why didn't you write or wire me, so I could have met you at the train and taken care of you?" asked Albert.

"The fact on't is," replied Uncle Terry, removing his hat and laying it on the floor beside him, "I've

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allus pulled my own boat in this world, an' it sorter goes agin the grain now to hist the oars over to 'nother fellow." Then reaching into his pocket, drawing out a letter, and handing it to Albert, he added, "'Bout two weeks ago I got this 'ere from that dum thief Frye. I was 'spectin' the gov'ment boat 'long most every day, and so couldn't cum any sooner."

Albert read the letter and gave a low whistle. "Frye must have been either very hard up when he wrote," he said, "or else the other parties are crowding him and this is his last effort to fleece you. I have heard that he has been speculating in wheat lately, and it may be he has got caught. I hope so, for it will be easier for us to bring him to terms. I have my plans all mapped out and I think we had best go for him at once, while he is likely to be in his office." Then calling to Frank, and rapidly writing a check for five hundred dollars, while that surprised young man was shaking hands with Uncle Terry, he continued: "Please go up to the station, Frank, and get an officer at once, and step into the Maverick Bank on your way back and get this check cashed. We will go prepared for the worst."

When Frank had gone Uncle Terry said, "There wa'n't no need o' yer gettin' money, Mr. Page; I've

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brung three hundred, which is all the cut-throat asked fur."

"We may need more, nevertheless," answered Albert, "and as I wish to make but one visit to Frye's office, it's best to go prepared. He may ask more now." Then after filling out a writ of replevin he added, "Excuse me a moment, Mr. Terry; I will be back soon."

He was absent perhaps five minutes, and then Uncle Terry was astonished to see a strange man enter from an inner room. He wore a full black beard, smoked glasses, broad slouch hat, and a clerical coat, which was buttoned close to his chin. Uncle Terry looked at him in surprise, waiting for the stranger to speak.

"Don't you know me, Uncle Terry?" said the new arrival.

"By gosh! it's you, Mr. Page," exclaimed the old man, "or else I'm tuck with a change o' heart." Then he added with a laugh, "I'd never known ye 'cept for yer voice."

"I'm all right, then, I guess," said Albert, "and now for my plan. When the officer comes we four will go at once to Frye's office. You will go in alone and open matters; contrive to leave the door ajar, and when you get to talking the rest of us will creep up and listen. And here is where your wits must work

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well. Act as though you did not suspect anything wrong, but tell him you are discouraged and have put out all the money you can; also that you are poor and can't afford to waste any more on what you believe to be a hopeless case. Then ask him to return you the trinkets you gave him, as the girl values them highly, and right here is where you must contrive to get Frye to admit he has these trinkets. Most likely he will refuse to give them up until his fee is paid, and he may ask quite a sum. If you can settle the matter by paying him one or two hundred dollars I should advise it, but not more. If it comes to his refusal we will walk in at that point and the officer will serve the writ. We can search his premises, and even make him open his safe, and if we find what we want, we will take it. If not, we are checkmated, and must find who employed him and appeal to them."

When Frank and the officer returned, and the former had also donned a disguise, the four proceeded at once to Frye's office. It was early, and none of the other office occupants on that floor had arrived. As agreed, Uncle Terry knocked at Frye's door alone, but no one answered. He knocked again; still no answer. He tried the door; it was locked. Then he knocked harder; no reply. Then he stepped back to

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where the others were waiting. "Thar's nobody in thar," he whispered, "or if thar is he's asleep!" Albert went forward and listened; there was no sound. Then he stooped and tried to look through the keyhole; it was plugged.

"I smell gas coming out of the keyhole," he whispered to the officer; "you go and try it."

The officer did so. Then he took out a pocket knife and thrust the blade through the keyhole and peeped in. Then he beckoned to Albert.

"Something's wrong in there, Mr. Page," he said. "I can see a man's legs, and the gas is coming out of that keyhole enough to choke you. We'd best call the janitor."

That official was found, and he too peeped.

"I noticed a light in Frye's office when I retired last night," he said; "depend upon it, there is something wrong." Then turning to the officer he added, "You are an officer of the law, and as I am in charge of this building I give you permission to open Frye's door on the score of public safety."

The burly officer waited for no further orders, but, grasping the knob, threw his whole weight against the door, and it gave way. A cry of surprise escaped him, and as the rest crowded up they saw a hideous sight. Frye was sitting in his chair with head

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thrown back staring at the ceiling, and with mouth and eyes wide open! The room was stifling with gas, and the officer opened the window. In doing so he noticed the two stop-cocks were opened and he turned them off. Then he returned to the hall. When the room was fit to breathe in again, all four entered, and the officer laid his hand upon Frye's face.

"Dead," he exclaimed, "and has been for hours!"

Then as the others crowded up to gaze at the face, which bore a look of inexpressible agony, Albert noticed an envelope on Frye's desk directed to Silas Terry. He quietly put it in his pocket and joined with the rest in a search of the room.

"It looks like a case of suicide," observed the officer, "door locked, keyhole and cracks plugged, window shut, and two gas-burners open! Safe unlocked and wide open, and here's a till with money in it!"

Then taking up a bundle of papers that lay in this till and examining them he gave a long whistle and exclaimed, "Here's a contract for fifty thousand bushels of wheat bought in Chicago at ninety-eight cents, and wheat closed yesterday at seventy-one! And here are two more lots, one for one hundred thousand bushels!" Then handing the certificates to Albert he added, "Old Nick has been bulling wheat,

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and if he has been holding on to these purchases for the last three weeks, I don't wonder he has taken gas!" And then, as a crowd had gathered, and were gazing at the ghastly staring face of Frye, made ten times more hideous in death than in life, he added, "In the name of the law I must close the door and notify a coroner."

When Albert, with Uncle Terry and Frank, reached his office he drew the letter he had taken from Frye's desk out of his pocket and handed it to Uncle Terry. "It was directed to you," he said, "and I thought best to bring it away."

When the old man opened it he exclaimed, "By the great eternal jumpin' Jehosaphat, if here ain't the hull o' the things we want so bad, and a letter to some furriners! Here, you read it, Mr. Page; the writin's wussen crow tracks in the mud."

The letter was as follows:

MESSRS. THYGESON & COMPANY, *Stockholm:*

GENTLEMEN: I have good and sufficient reason to believe an heir to the estate in your hands exists in the person of a young woman now living with one Silas Terry, a lighthouse keeper on Southport Island, Maine, and known as Telly Terry. This person, when a babe, was saved from a wreck by this man Terry and by him cared for and brought up. A report of the wreck and the saving of one life (the child's) was made at

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the time by this man Terry, and is now on file in Washington. As I am going away on a long journey, I turn this matter over to you for further investigation, and subscribe myself,

Respectfully yours,

NICHOLAS FRYE.

When Albert had finished the reading of this important letter aloud he grasped Uncle Terry's hand and exclaimed: "Telly's heritage is saved for her, and for that I forgive Frye for all the wrongs he has done you and me."

As for Uncle Terry he remarked, "Wal, he cost me four hundred, but I'll forgive him that now, an' mighty glad to do it." Then he added with a chuckle, "He must 'a' had a sudden change o' heart, and if the Widder Leach hears on't she'll swear 'twas the workings o' the Lord on a sinner's mind. He looked as though he'd seen some awful sight."

When the tragic end of Frye had been duly commented upon, Albert said to Uncle Terry, "Take those valuables back with you, but leave me the letter and I will attend to the rest." Then he added, "You are my guest as long as you can stay in Boston, and now we can go sight-seeing with a light heart."

How earnestly Albert set about entertaining Uncle Terry, and how thoroughly the old man enjoyed it all, need not be enlarged upon. When two days

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later he was ready to depart, Albert handed him a large package containing a silk dress pattern for Aunt Lissy, a woolen one for Mrs. Leach, and a complete artist's outfit for Telly. "With these things," he said, "go my best regards for those they are for, and among them are the photographs of two sketches I made when I was with you that I want you to ask Miss Telly to paint for me."

When she opened her package she found two sketches of herself, one leaning against a rock with her face resting on her hand, and the other sitting beside a flower-decked boat with a broad sun-hat in her lap.

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CHAPTER XXXII

THE DEMNITION GRIND

LIFE should not be all work, neither can it be all play and be enjoyable, as Frank Nason found to his sorrow. Whether a realizing sense of the scant respect Alice Page had for an idler, or his own experience in that role, opened his eyes first, is hard to say. It is likely that both had weight, and it is not to his discredit if the possible approbation of Alice was the sole cause of his changed ideas. That he wished her to feel it was, is certain, as the tone of his letters showed. In one which he wrote soon after his return to Boston he said, "My mother, and in fact all my people, seem to think so much more of me since I have set about fitting myself for a profession. Father says he is growing proud of me, and that pleases me best of all, for he is and always has been my best friend. Of course, I think the world of Blanch, and she seems to think I am the best fellow in the world. Little do any of them know or even guess that it is you for whom I am working, and always with the hope that

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you will deem me worthy of the great prize you well know I am striving for. How many times I recall every moment of that one short hour on the old mill-pond, and all that made it sacred to me, no one can tell. I go out little except to escort mother and the girls to the theatre once in a while, and so anxious am I to be able to pass an examination, I often go to the office and read law till midnight."

When this effusion reached Alice the mountains around Sandgate were just putting on their autumn glory of color, and that night when she sat on the porch and heard the katydids in the fast thinning foliage of the elms she had what she called an old-fashioned fit of the blues. And how lonely it was there, too!

Aunt Susan, never a talkative person, sat close, but as dumb as a graven image; no house near, and only the twinkling lights of several the other side of the valley visible. On a knoll just below them she knew were a few score of white headstones, among them her mother's, and when there was a moon she could see them plainly. It is during the lonely hours of our lives that we see ourselves best, and this quiet evening — no more quiet than many others, perhaps, but seemingly so to Alice — she saw herself and her possible future as it seemed to be. Every word of

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her lover's letter had been an emissary of both joy and sorrow — joy that he was so devoted to her, and sorrow because she felt that an impassable barrier separated them. "He will forget me in a few months," she said to herself, "and by the time he has won his coveted law degree his scheming mother will have some eligible girl all ready for him to fall in love with. As for me, she will never have the chance to frown at me, for even if Blanch begs I would never set foot in her house!" When her feelings had carried her up to this point she arose, and, going into the parlor, began playing. Her piano was the best and about the only companion she had, and quickly responded to her moods. And now what did it tell? She played; but every chord was a minor one, full of the pathos of tears and sorrow. She sang; but every song that came to her lips carried the same refrain, and told only of hungry hearts and unanswered love. And last and worst of all, almost insensibly her fingers strayed to the chords of one well-remembered song. One verse only she sang, and when the last pathetic line was ended she arose and with a "What a fool I am to care, anyway!" muttered to herself, went back to the porch where her aunt was sitting. And then, as the moon came up from behind the mountain, flooding the narrow valley with pale light, in spite of her-

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self her eyes strayed to that little knoll where the white stones showed clear and distinct. It was the last straw, and going to her aunt and kneeling, she bowed her head in that good old soul's lap, and burst into tears. It may be that the hand which stroked her fair head at this outbreak recalled her mother's, for she only sobbed the harder. It did not last long, however, and when the storm was over she arose and said:

"There, auntie, I've been spoiling for a good cry all day, and now I've had it and feel better."

But did she? Let those who can put themselves in her place, with her proud spirit and loving heart, answer the question.

And here it is time and fit to speak of her brother, toward whom her heart had always turned when in trouble, and not in vain. Of the jest that Frank had made regarding the island girl Albert had fallen in love with, she thought but little. That he might marry in due time she expected as a matter of course; that it would make any difference in his feelings towards her she did not for one moment consider. Now she fell to thinking what a void it would make in her life if his thoughts and affection were centred elsewhere. Then she began wondering why he had failed to write as often as usual during the past six

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weeks. She had known his plans for the yachting-trip and imagined his letter announcing its failure and his return to work an expression of disappointment. Since then he had written but once, telling her that he was overwhelmed with business and enclosing a check, but failing to enclose any but the briefest expression of love.

Life with Alice was at best a lonesome one, and Sunday, with its simple services in the village church, the singing in the choir, and pleasant nods from all she met, the only break in its monotony. Now during summer vacation time it was worse than ever, and she began counting the days until school opened again. Once, with Aunt Susan for company, she had visited the old mill-pond, and rowing the boat herself, had gathered an ample supply of lilies, only to come home so depressed she did not speak once during the four-mile drive. She had written Frank an account of the trip, but failed to mention that she had landed at a certain point and sat on the bank and shed a few tears while Aunt Susan waited in the boat and sorted the lilies. She had enclosed a wee little lily bud in this letter, but not a word by which he could infer that her heart was very hungry for — some one.

But all things, and all series of days, be they filled

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THE OLD MILL

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with joy or sorrow, come to an end, and so did the lonely vacation days of Alice. When the school gathered once more, and the daily round of simple recitations began, she realized as never before how blessed a thing it is in this world that we can have occupation. And even more blessed to Alice Page, whose proud heart was a little hungry for love.

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CHAPTER XXXIII

OLD AND YOUNG

A WEEK after Uncle Terry's return from Boston he asked Telly to go with him on his daily drive to the head of the island. He had described the exciting incidents of his trip both to his wife and Telly, and, feeling obliged to do so, had told them that Mr. Page had taken charge of the case and would communicate with him when anything definite was learned. He had noticed that Telly had seemed unusually cheerful ever since, and likewise more affectionate. Also — a fact that did not escape his observant eyes — that she had at once set about painting the two sketches Albert had sent.

"The leaves is turnin' purty fast," he said to her that day, "an' I thought mebbe ye'd like ter go with me an' take a look at 'em. They won't last long."

When the two had jogged along in almost silence for a few miles he said, pointing to a small rock by the roadside, "Thar's whar I fust found Mr. Page, Telly."

She did not know it, but he was watching her face

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closely as he said it, and noted well the look of interest that came.

"I told him that day," he continued, chuckling, "that lawyers was mostly all thieves, an' the fact that he didn't take it amiss went fur to convince me he was an exception. It's a hit bird as allus flutters. From what he's done an' the way he behaves I'm thinkin' more an' more o' him the better I know him, an' I believe him now to be as honest an' square a young man as I ever met."

He was covertly watching Telly as he said this, but her face remained impassive. "I think Mr. Page is very nice," she answered quietly, "and has a kind heart. Did you know he gave Aunty Leach ten dollars one day when he was here, and she hasn't done praising him yet? She says it's a sure forerunner of 'a change o' heart,' and when she got the dress pattern the poor old creature cried."

Uncle Terry was silent a few moments while he flicked at the daisies with his whip as they rode along.

"Ye've had a couple o' letters from him sense he went back, hain't ye?" he asked finally. "I noticed they was in his writin'." He was still watching her face and noticed this time that a faint color came.

"Yes, he wrote me he was finishing a couple of sketches he made here and wanted to have me paint

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them for him," she replied quietly. "They are the ones I am working on now."

"That's all right, Telly," continued Uncle Terry briskly, "I'm glad ye're doin' it fur him, fur he's doin' a good deal fur us an' is likely to do more."

Nothing further was said on the subject until they were on their way back from the head of the island. The sun was getting low, the sea winds that rustled among the scarlet-leaved oaks, or murmured through the spruce thickets, had almost fallen away, and just as they came to an opening where the broad ocean was visible he said:

"Did ye ever stop ter think, Telly, that Lissy an' me is gittin' purty well 'long in years? I'm over seventy now, an' in common course o' things I won't be here many years longer."

The girl looked at him quickly. "What makes you speak like that, father?" she said; "do you want to make me blue?" There was a little note of tenderness in her voice that did not escape him, but he answered promptly:

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way, Telly, only I was thinkin' how fast the years go by. The leaves turnin' allus makes me think on't. It seems no time sence they fust came out an' now they're goin' agin! It don't seem more'n two or three years sence ye was a

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little baby a-pullin' my fingers an' callin' me da-da, an' now ye'r' a woman grown. It won't be long afore ye'r' a-sayin' 'yes' to some man as wants ye, an' a-goin' to a home o' yer own."

Telly turned to him again, and this time there was a decided note of pain in her voice: "So that is what you are thinking of, father, is it? And you are imagining that some one by the name of Page is likely to take me away from you, who are and always have been all there is in life for me!"

She paused, and he noticed that two tears trembled on her long lashes, to be quickly brushed away. "Please do not think me so ungrateful," she continued, "as to let any man coax me away from you, for no man can. Here I was cast ashore, here I've found a home and love, and here I shall stay as long as you and mother live, and when you two are gone, I want to go too!" She swallowed a lump that rose in her throat and then continued: "As for this legacy that you have worried about so much, and I am sure has cost you a good deal, it is yours, every penny of it, and whether it is big or little, you are to keep and use it as you need if you love me. You haven't been yourself for six months, father, and all for this trouble. I have watched you more than you think, and wished many times you had never heard of it."

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She had spoken earnestly and truthfully, and when she ceased Uncle Terry looked at her a moment and then suddenly dropped the reins and putting both arms around her, held her for a moment and then kissed her. It was a surprise to her, and the first of its kind for many years.

"I hain't bin thinkin' 'bout myself in this matter," he observed as he picked up the reins again and chirruped to the old horse, "an' only am wantin' ter see ye provided fur, Telly. As fur Mr. Page or any other man, every woman needs a purtector in this world, an' when the right 'un comes along, don't let yer feelin's or sense o' duty stand in the way o' havin' a home o' yer own."

"But you are not anxious to be rid of me, are you, father?" asked Telly, smiling now and gladdened by his unusual caress.

"Ye won't think that o' me," he replied, as they rattled down the sharp inclines into the village, and the ride came to an end.

But she noticed after that that he wanted her with him oftener than ever.

Later when another letter came for her in a hand that he recognized, he handed it to her with a smile and immediately left her alone to read it.

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CHAPTER XXXIV

FIRELIGHT FLASHES

THE halcyon days of autumn, that seemed like the last sweet smiles of summer, had come, when one day Albert packed a valise and boarded the early morning train for Maine. An insidious longing to see the girl that had been in his thoughts for four months had come to him and week by week increased until it had overcome business demands. Then he had a little good news from Stockholm, which, as he said to himself, would serve as an excuse. He had told Frank what his errand was to Uncle Terry, and to say to any that called that he would return in two days. Of his possible reception by Telly he was a good deal in doubt. She had written to him in reply to his letters, but between each of the simple, unaffected lines all he could read was an undertone of sadness. That, with a vivid recollection of what Uncle Terry had disclosed, led him to believe there was some burden on her mind and that he had or was no part in it.

When he grasped Uncle Terry's hand at the boat landing that old man's face fairly beamed.

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"I'm right glad ter see ye," he said, "an' so'll the folks be. Thar ain't much goin' on at the Cape any time, an' sence ye wur thar it seems wussen ever."

"How are your good wife and Telly these days?" asked Albert, "and that odd old lady who asked me the first thing if I was a believer?"

"Wal, things go on 'bout as usual," replied Uncle Terry, as the two drove away from the landing, which consisted of a narrow wharf and shed, with not a house in sight. "Bascom does most o' the talkin' out o' meetin's, an' Oaks most on't in, 'ceptin' the widder, an' none on 'em say much that's new."

Albert smiled, glad to find Uncle Terry in such good spirits. "I thought I'd run down and stay a night or so with you," he said, "and tell you what I've learned about the legacy."

Uncle Terry's face brightened. "Hev ye got good news?" he asked.

"In a way, yes," replied Albert; "this firm of Thygeson & Company write expressing surprise that Frye should have given up the case after they had paid him over five hundred dollars, and ask that I file a bond with the Swedish consul in Washington before they submit a statement of the case and inventory of the estate to us. It is only a legal formality, and I have complied with it."

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"They must 'a' got skeery o' lawyers frum dealing with that dum thief Frye," put in Uncle Terry, "an' I don't blame 'em. Did ye larn the real cause o' his suicidin'?"

"Wheat speculation," answered Albert. "He dropped over sixty thousand dollars in three weeks and it broke his miserly heart. I never want to see such a sight again in my life as his face was that morning. It haunted me for a week after."

When Uncle Terry's home was reached Albert found a most cordial reception awaiting him from Aunt Lissy, and what pleased him far more, a warmly welcoming smile from Telly.

"I'm sorry we didn't know ye were comin'," said Aunt Lissy, "so't we could be better prepared for company."

"I wish you wouldn't consider me company," replied Albert; "just think I am one of the family, and let it go at that."

The long ride in the crisp sea air, following the scanty railroad lunch, had given him a most amazing appetite, and the bountiful supper of stewed chicken and cold lobster, not to mention other good things of Aunt Lissy's providing, received a hearty acceptance. To have these people unaffectedly glad to see him, and so solicitous of his personal comfort, carried him

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back to his own home and mother of years before in a way that touched him. He felt himself among friends, and friends that were glad to see him and meant to show it. Although it was dark when supper was over, he could not resist going out on the rocks and listening a few minutes to the waves as they beat upon them. There was no moon, but the lighthouse gleam over his head faintly outlined the swells, as one by one they tossed their spray up to where he stood; back of him the welcome glow of Uncle Terry's home, and all around the wide ocean, dark and sombre. What a change from the busy hive of men he had left that morning! Only a brief space was he left to contemplate it, when he heard a voice just back of him saying:

"Here's yer coat, Mr. Page; the night's gittin' chilly, and ye better put it on 'fore ye ketch cold."

When the two returned to the house Albert found a bright fire burning in the sitting-room, and going to the entry way, where he had left his valise, to get a box of cigars for Uncle Terry, found that the valise had disappeared.

"I put yer things in yer room," said the old man, and handing him a lamp he added, "ye know whar 'tis now, I hope, so make yerself tew hum."

Later, when they were all gathered about the

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fire, both the "wimmin folks" with their sewing, and Uncle Terry enjoying one of the cigars Albert had brought him, the old man's face gleamed as genial as the firelight. It was a genuine treat to him to have this young man for company, and he showed it. He told stories of the sea, of storm and shipwreck, and curious experiences that had come to him during the many years he had dwelt beside the ocean; and while Albert listened, stealing occasional glances at the sweet-faced but plainly clad girl whose eyes were bent upon her sewing, the neighboring waves kept up their monotone, and the fire sparkled and glowed with a ruddy light.

"Don't you ever get tired of hearing the waves beat so near you?" asked Albert at last.

"Wal, there's suthin' curious 'bout that," answered Uncle Terry; "I've got so uster 'em they seem sorter necessary ter livin', an' when I go 'way it's hard fer me ter sleep fer missin' em. Why, don't yer like ter hear 'em?" he added curiously.

"Oh, yes," replied Albert; "I enjoy them always, and they are a lullaby that puts me to sleep at once."

It was but little past nine when Uncle Terry arose, and bringing in a basket of wood observed, "I guess I'll turn in middlin' arly so's to git up arly'n pull my traps 'fore breakfast, an' then I'll take ye out fishin'.

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The mackerel's bitin' good these days, an' mebbe ye'll enjoy it."

Aunt Lissy soon followed and Albert was left alone with Telly. It looked intentional, but he was no less grateful for it. For a few moments he watched her, still intent on her work, and wondered what was in her mind.

"Have you finished my sketches?" he said finally, feeling that was the most direct avenue to her thoughts.

"Not quite," she replied, "I had to go up to the cove to work on one in order to satisfy myself, and a good many days it was too rough to row up there, so that hindered me. I have that one finished, though, and the other almost."

The thought that this girl had rowed four miles every day in order to paint from the original scene of his sketch struck him forcibly.

"May I see the finished one?" he asked.

She brought it, and once more he was surprised. Not only was the picture of herself sitting in the shade of a low spruce reproduced, but the fern-decorated boat near by, the quiet little cove in front, and a view of ocean beyond.

It was a charming picture, and vividly recalled his visit there with her.

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"There is only one thing lacking," she said shyly, as he held it at an angle so the firelight would shine upon it, "and I didn't dare put that in without your consent."

"I do not notice anything left out, as I recall the spot," he answered.

"But there is," she replied, "and one that should be there to make the picture correct. Can't you guess?"

He looked at Telly's face, upon which a roguish smile had come, but it did not dawn on him what she meant.

"No, I can't guess," he said; "tell me what is lacking?"

"Yourself," she replied.

It was a pretty compliment, and coming from any one except Telly he would have doubted its sincerity.

"But I do not want the picture to remind me of myself," he answered, "I wanted it so I could see you and recall the day we were there." She made no reply, and he laid it on the table and asked for the other one. It was all done except the finishing touches, but it did not seem to be a reproduction of his original sketch at the cove.

"I took the liberty of changing it a little," she said as he was looking at it, "and put in the background where you said you first saw me."

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"It was nice of you to think of making the change," he replied quickly, "and I am very glad you did. I wanted it to portray you as I first saw you."

A faint flush came into her face at this, that did not escape him, and as she was watching the fire he for a moment studied the sweet face turned half away. And what a charming profile it was, with rounded chin, delicate patrician nose, and long eyelashes just touching the cheek that bore a tell-tale flush! Was that faint color due to the fire or to his words? He could not tell. Then they dropped into a pleasant chat about trifles, and the ocean's voice kept up its rhythm, the fire sparkled, and the small cottage clock ticked the happy moments away.

"How is Mrs. Leach?" he asked at last; "does she pray as fervently at every meeting?"

"Just the same," replied Telly, "and always will as long as she has breath. It is, as father says, her only consolation."

"I have thought of that evening many times since," he continued, "and the impression that poor old lady made on me with her piteous supplication. It was unlike anything of the kind that I ever listened to. I wonder," he added musingly, "how it would affect a Boston church congregation some evening to have such an appearing figure, clad as she was, rise and

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utter the prayer she did. It would startle them, I think."

"I do not think Mrs. Leach would enter one of your city churches," responded Telly, "and certainly not clad as she has to be. She has a little pride left, even if she is poor."

"Oh, I meant no reflection," explained Albert, feeling that Telly thought the old lady needed defending, "only the scene was so impressive, I wondered how it would affect a fashionable church gathering. I think it would do them good," he added candidly, "to listen to a real sincere prayer that came from some one's heart and was not manufactured for the occasion. Those who wear fine silks and broadcloth and sit in cushioned pews seldom hear such a prayer as she uttered that night."

Then as Telly made no response he sat in silence a few moments, mentally contrasting the girl he had really come to woo with those he had met in Boston.

And what a contrast!

This girl clad in a gray dress, severe in its simplicity, and so ill-fitting that it really detracted from the beautiful outlines of her form, though not entirely hiding them, for that was impossible. Her luxuriant tresses were braided and coiled low down on the back of her head, and at her throat a tiny bow of blue.

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Not an ornament of any name or nature did she wear, not even a single ring. Only the crown of her sunny hair, two little rose leaves in her cheeks, and the queen-like majesty of throat and shoulders and bust, so classic that not one woman in a hundred but would envy her their possession.

And then, what was equally as striking, what a contrast in speech, expression, and ways! Timid to the verge of bashfulness, utterly unaffected, and yet sincere, tender, and thoughtful in each and every utterance; a beautiful flower grown to perfection among the rocks of this seldom visited island, untrained by conventionality and unsullied by the world. "I wonder how she would act if suddenly dropped into the Nasons' home, or what would Alice think of her!" Then as he noted the sad little droop of her exquisite lips, and as she, wondering at his silence, turned her pleading eyes toward him, there came into his heart in an instant a feeling that, despite all her timidity and all her lack of worldly wisdom, he would value her love and confidence far above any woman's he had ever met!

Then, recalling the hint as to her nature disclosed by Uncle Terry, he resolved to probe it there and then, or at least to draw her out a little.

"Miss Terry," he said gently, "do you know I

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fancy that living here as you have all your life, within sound of the sad sea waves, has woven a little of their melancholy into your nature and a little of their pathos into your eyes. I thought so the first time I saw you, and the more I see of you the more I think it is so."

Telly was looking at him curiously when he began this rather pointed observation, and at its close her eyes fell and the two rose leaves in her cheeks increased in size. For a moment she hesitated, and then as she answered he detected a note of pain in her voice.

"The ocean does sound sad to me," she said, "and at times it makes me very blue. Then I am so much alone and have no one in whom to confide my feelings. Mother would not understand me, and if father thought I wasn't happy it would make him miserable." Then turning her pathetic eyes full upon her questioner she added: "Did you ever think, Mr. Page, that the sound of the waves might be the voices of drowned people trying to be heard? I believe every human being has a soul, and for all we know, if they have gone down into the ocean, their souls may be in the water and possibly are trying to speak to us."

"Oh, no, no, Miss Terry," responded Albert

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hastily, "that is all imagination on your part and due to your being too much alone with your own thoughts. The ocean of course has a sad sound to us all, if we stop and think about it, but it's best not to. What you need is the companionship of some cheerful girl about your own age and fewer hours with only yourself for company." Then he added thoughtfully, "I wish you could visit Alice for a few months. She would drive the megrims out of your mind."

"I should be glad to have her come and visit me," replied Telly eagerly, and in her simple sincerity adding, "I am sure I should love her."

Albert had hard work to restrain a smile, but he was none the less charmed by her frankness. "I wish she could," he answered, "but she is a schoolteacher and that duty keeps her occupied most of the time. I shall bring her down here next summer," he added earnestly. Then feeling it unfair to conceal the fact that he knew her history any longer, he said, "I beg your pardon, Miss Terry, but I know what is at the bottom of your melancholy moods and I knew it the second night I was here last summer. Your father told me your history then."

"He did?" she replied, turning her pleading eyes upon him in surprise; "you knew my unfortunate history that night?"

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"I did, every word of it," he answered tenderly, "and I should have told you I did if I had not been afraid it would hurt you to know I knew it then."

Her eyes fell and a look of pain came into her face.

Then perhaps the quick sympathy she had shown regarding the pictures, or the pathos of that look, or both, made him a trifle reckless. Such things are apt to have that effect upon a young man rapidly entering the illusion of love.

"Please banish this mood from now on and never let it return," he said hastily; "I have come to tell you that in the near future the mystery of your life may be solved, and what is better, that a legacy awaits your claiming. The matter has been in the hands of an unprincipled lawyer for some months, as no doubt Mr. Terry has told you, but now he is dead and I have taken hold of it, and shall not rest until you have your rights. We shall know what your heritage is and all about your ancestors in a few months." Then he added tenderly, "Would it pain you to hear more about it, or would you rather not?"

"Father has told me a little of it," she answered, "but I know he has kept most of the trouble to himself. It's his way. Since he came back from Boston

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he has acted like his old self, and no words can tell how glad I am. As for the money, it must and shall go to him, every penny of it, and all the comfort I can give him as long as he lives as well."

She spoke vehemently, and a look of pride came into her face.

"I thank you for what you have said," came from Albert quickly, "for now I shall dare to tell you another story before I go back. Not to-night," he added smiling, as she looked at him curiously, "but you shall hear it in due time. Up at the cove, maybe, if to-morrow afternoon is pleasant. I too am superstitious in some ways."

An unusual elation came to him after this, and perhaps to keep Telly from guessing what his story was he talked upon every subject that might interest her, avoiding the one nearest his heart. It came with a surprise when the little clock chimed eleven, and he at once arose and begged her pardon for the possible trespass upon conventional hours. "You will go up to the cove with me?" he asked as he paused a moment at the foot of the stairs.

"I shall enjoy it very much," she answered simply, "and I have a favor I want to ask of you, which is, to let me make a sketch of you just where you sat the time your boat drifted away."

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When he retired it was long after he heard the clock downstairs strike the midnight hour before he failed to note the ocean's voice beneath his window, and in his dreams he saw Telly's face smiling in the firelight.

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CHAPTER XXXV

THE "WIDDER" LEACH

"I'm goin' to give ye a taste o' mackerel fishin'," said Uncle Terry the next morning after breakfast. "We'll go over to the fish house an' ye can put on some oilers an' save yer good clothes." On the way they met the well-remembered old lady Albert had first noticed at the prayer-meeting. She recognized him, and offering a rather soiled hand (for she had been spreading fish on the racks), exclaimed:

"In the Lord's name I thank ye, Mr. Page, for rememberin' a poor old creetur like me and sendin' that dress. I make sure the Lord's teched yer heart, an' if ye ain't a believer yet, ye will be."

"I am glad my little remembrance pleased you," answered Albert pleasantly, "it was only a trifle, and you need not feel obligated for it." He kept on after Uncle Terry, not wishing to waste any time; but she followed to add more thanks, ending with, "God bless ye, sir; an' may He warm the heart o' one good girl, fer ye desarve it."

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It struck him as a little curious that this eccentric old lady should have so well read his feelings towards Telly, but it pleased him just the same. When he had donned a suit of oilers, and Uncle Terry was pulling out of the little cove, Albert said, "That old lady is the most pious person I ever met, and with her it seems entirely sincere. No one could doubt she means every word she says."

"Wal, it's about all the consolation she gits out o' life, an' 'twixt you an' me she takes more'n all the rest o' the believers here," answered Uncle Terry, "an' at times I 'most envy her fer it. She don't airn more'n 'nough to keep soul an' body together, an' winters some on us allus helps her. She has nobody in the world that's near her, lives alone in a little shanty, an' is over seventy, and yet she thanks the Lord three times a day for his many blessin's an's sure he'd never let her come to want. She's lived that way fer goin' on thirty year, an' no one ever heard her complain. Both her husband an' son went down in a coaster one winter's night, on Monhegan Shoals, an' tho' nachly she took on 'bout it a spell, she believed it was the Lord's will, an' meant to be a blessin'."

"She is a monomaniac on the subject, I should imagine," observed Albert.

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"Wal, sorter cracked 'bout religion," answered Uncle Terry, "leastwise that's my notion; an' mebbe it's lucky she is, seein' she's poor, an' nothin' but that fer comfort. She's smart 'nuff other ways though, an' there ain't nothin' goin' on here she don't know. She's kind-hearted too, an' if she had anything ter give, she'd share her last cent with ye. If ennybody's sick, she's allus ready to help. Thar's lots o' wuss folks in the world than the Widder Leach." And then as if that crowned the sum total of her virtues he added, "Telly an' Lissy thinks lots o' her."

He paused for breath, and turning to see if they were heading right, resumed his strong and steady pulling. The morning was wondrously fair and still; the sun, a round red ball, had been up not over half an hour, and a mile ahead of them lay Damriscove Island, green and treeless. Close by a flock of seagulls were floating on the still water, and away out seaward the swells were breaking on a long and narrow ledge.

"Thar," observed Uncle Terry, pointing to this ledge, "is whar Telly started for shore all alone, just nineteen years ago last March." And then adding, while he watched Albert's averted face, "'Twas an onlucky day fer the poor sailors an' a lucky one for us, fer she's been a heap o' comfort ever since."

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"Tell me, Uncle Terry," said Albert, "why it is she feels so extremely sensitive regarding her romantic history, and what is the cause of the peculiar moods you spoke of last summer? I noticed it last evening, and it pained me very much."

"It's hard tellin'," was the answer, "she's a girl that's given ter broodin' a good deal, an' mebbe when she was told the facts she began ter suspect some o' her ancestors would be lookin' her up some day. She allus has been a good deal by herself sence she got her schoolin', an' most likely doin' lots o' thinkin'. But Telly's all right," he added briefly, "an' the most willin' an' tender-hearted creetur I ever seen or heard on. She'll make an amazin' good wife fer some man, if she ever finds the right 'un."

It is needless to say some one else in the boat echoed that belief in thought. When they reached the island Uncle Terry landed, and going to the top of a cliff, scanned the sea for signs of fish.

"Mackerel's curus fish," he observed to Albert, who had followed. "They's a good deal like some wimmin: ye never know whar ter find 'em. Yesterday mornin' that cove jest inside o' the pint was 'live with 'em, an' to-day I can't see a sign o' one. We better sit here an' wait a spell till I sight a school."

To a dreamer like Albert Page the limitless ocean

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view he now enjoyed lifted him far above mackerel and their habits. His mind was also occupied a good deal by Telly, and while he desired to please the kindly old man who imagined fishing would entertain him, his heart was not in it.

"Don't let us worry about the mackerel, Uncle Terry," he observed as they seated themselves on top of a cliff, "this lone, uninhabited island and the view here will content me until your fish are hungry."

"It allus sets me thinkin' too," was the answer, "an' wonderin' whar we cum from and what we air here for. An' our stay is so amazin' short besides! We air born, grow up, work a spell, git old and die, an' that's the end. Why, it don't seem only last year when I cum to the Cape, an' it's goin' nigh on to thirty now, an' I'm a'most through my spell o' life. What puzzles me," he added, "is what's the good o' bein' born at all if ye've got ter die so soon! An' more'n all that, if life's the Lord's blessin', as the widder b'lieves, why are so many only born to suffer, or be crippled all their lives? An' why are snakes an' all sorts o' vermin, to say nothin' o' cheatin' lawyers, like Frye, ever born at all?"

Albert smiled at the odd coupling of Frye with vermin. "There are a good many wiser heads than mine, Uncle Terry, that have never been able to

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answer your question," he replied, "and I doubt if they ever will. To my mind the origin of life is an enigma, the wide variations in matters of health and ability an injustice, and the end a blank wall that none who scale ever recross with tidings of the beyond. As some one has expressed it: 'Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities! We strive in vain to look beyond the heights; we cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry.'"

"An' right thar," put in Uncle Terry earnestly, "is whar I allus envy the believers, as the widder calls 'em, for they are satisfied what is beyond and have it all pict'rd out in thar minds, even to what the streets are paved with, an' the kind o' music they're goin' ter have. It's all guesswork in my way o' thinkin', but they are sure on't, an' that feelin' is lots o' comfort to 'em when they are drawin' near the end. I've been a sort er scoffer all my life," he added reflectively, "an' can't help bein' a doubter, but there are times when I envy Aunt Leach an' the rest on' em the delusion I b'lieve they're laborin' under."

"But do you believe death ends all consciousness?" asked Albert seriously. "Have you no hope, ever, of a life beyond this blank wall?"

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"Sartin I have hopes," replied Uncle Terry at once, "same as all on us has, but I wish I was more sure my hopes was goin' ter be realized. Once in a while I git the feelin' thar ain't no use in hopin', an' then a little suthin keeps sayin' 'Mebbe — mebbe — mebbe' — an' I feel more cheerful again."

Albert looked at the roughly clad and withered old man who sat near, and in whose words lurked an undertone of sadness mingled with a faint hope, and in an instant back came a certain evening months before when the Widow Leach had uttered a prayer that had stirred his feelings as no such utterance ever had before. All the pathos of that simple petition, all its abiding faith in God's goodness and wisdom, all its utter self-abnegation and absolute confidence in a life beyond the grave, came back, and all the consolation that feeling surely held for the old and poverty-environed soul who uttered it impressed him in sharp contrast to the doubting "mebbe — mebbe" of Uncle Terry.

Then again he thought of all the sneers against faith and religious conviction he had found in the writings of Paine and Voltaire; all the brilliant epigrams and sharp sarcasms he had heard fall from the lips of Ingersoll, and how he had felt a growing belief that faith in the Bible was but an evidence of

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ignorance and the ear-mark of superstition. Then following that came a contrasting comparison of the peace of mind that was the widow's and the lack of it that was Uncle Terry's, both of whom must feel that only a few short years were left them. And again following the line of comparison, what had he to look forward to when the end of all things earthly drew near? Truly, as he had thought the night that poor but devout old soul had clasped her hands and thanked God for the blessed belief that was her comfort and staff, what availed the doubt and distrust of atheism? All the epigrams of Ingersoll and the sneers of Voltaire served only to remove a hope and left nought to take its place; a hope, the divine solace of which is and will be for all time a blessed ray of light piercing the dark shadow of the beyond; a beacon beside which all the cold philosophy of sceptics will at the end fade away.

Then as Albert looked out to where the waves were breaking upon a ledge, and back again to this old man, sitting with bowed head beside him, a sincere regret that it was not in his power to utter one word that would aid in dispelling the clouds of doubt came to him. "Since I lack in faith myself," he thought, "all I can say will only increase his doubt. I wish I had as much faith as the widow, but I have not,

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and possibly never shall have." For a long time he sat in silence, living over the years during which scepticism had been slowly but surely growing upon him, and then Uncle Terry suddenly looked up at him. It is likely the old man's keen eyes read at a glance what was in Albert's mind, for he said: "It don't do no good ter brood over this matter o' believin', Mr. Page; I've wished I thought different many a time, an' more so now I'm gittin' near the end o' life, but I can't, an' so thar's no use in worryin'. Our 'pinions 'bout these matters are a good deal due to our bringin' up, and the experiences we've met with. Mine connected with those as has perfessed religion has, to say the least, been unfortnit, but as I said afore, I wish I believed different."

He paused a few moments, watching the ground swells breaking below them on the rocks, and then added sadly: "This hopin' ain't allus best fur some on us either, fur it's hopin' fur some one to cum year after year that's made Telly what she is, an' grieved Lissy an' me more'n she ever knew."

Albert looked curiously at the old man beside him, whose rough garb and storm-beaten face gave so little evidence of the tender heart beneath, and a new feeling of trust and affection came to him. In some ways Uncle Terry seemed so like his own father. Then

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following that came a sudden impulse to be utterly frank with him.

"Uncle Terry," he said, "I have a little story to tell you, and as it comes close to you, I believe it's right that you should know it. The first time I saw Telly I said to myself, 'That girl is a prize any man may feel proud to win.' I asked her if I might write to her, and what with her few letters, and the little I have seen of her, I feel that she is the one I want for a wife. I have not even hinted it to her yet, and before I do I would like to feel that you are satisfied with me. May I have your consent to win her if I can?"

Uncle Terry reached out and grasped Albert's hand, and shaking it cordially answered: "Ye hev my best wishes in the matter, an' I wouldn't say that if I didn't think ye worthy o' her!" Then he added with a droll smile, "Lissy an' me sorter 'spected that Telly was the magnet that drew ye down here!"

"I thank you for your confidence and consent," replied Albert gratefully, glad that he had spoken. "I am earning an income that is more than sufficient for two, and if Telly will say 'yes,' I shall be the happiest man on earth. And now," he added, "let's go fishing, Uncle Terry."

"I guess it's 'bout time," was the answer, "fur

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thar's two schools workin' into the cove, an' we'll have some fun."

Three hours after, when they landed at the cove, fairly sated with pulling in the gamy little mackerel, and happy as two boys, Telly met them with a smile and the news that dinner was ready.

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CHAPTER XXXVI

A NAMELESS COVE

"WE will go in my boat," said Telly the next afternoon when she and her admirer were ready to start on their trip to the cove, and unlocking a small annex to Uncle Terry's boathouse, showed him a dainty cedar craft, cushioned and carpeted. "You may help me launch the 'Sea Shell'" (as the boat was named), she added smiling, "and then you may steer."

"No, that is the lady's privilege in all voyages," he answered, "and we must begin this one right."

It was a good four-mile pull to the mouth of the inlet, and when he helped his fair passenger out he said, "Do you mean to say you rowed up here alone every day to work on that picture, Telly?" and he added hastily, "you will let me call you Telly now, won't you?"

"Why not? All my friends do, and I feel you are my friend." Then she added, "Now I am going to have my revenge and make you pose while I sketch this time. It was the other way before."

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"I am glad it is," he said, "for my arms are too tired to use for an hour. How do you want me, flat on the rock fast asleep, the way I was when my boat drifted away?"

"Oh, no," she replied hastily, "that would look as if you were dead, and as this is to be my reminder of you, I want you very much alive." She seemed in unusually good spirits, and in a far brighter mood than usual, and ready to jest and joke with unaffected gayety. As for the pose she wanted Albert to assume, she could not determine which she liked the best.

"I want to sketch you in the position most natural to you here," she said finally, "and must ask you to choose that yourself."

"Let us trim the boat the way mine was that day," he suggested at last, "and I will sit beside it and smoke while you work."

The idea was adopted, and while Telly sketched, he smoked, contented to watch the winsome face, so oblivious of his admiring glances.

"There," she observed, after a half hour of active pencilling, "please lay your cigar aside and look pleasant. I want to catch the expression of your face."

When the sketch was completed she asked if he had any suggestions to make.

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"Only one," he replied, "and that is, I would like you in the picture and sitting beside me."

She colored a little at this, for though utterly unused to the polite flatteries of society, she could not mistake his open admiration.

"I would rather not be in it," she replied soberly. "I only want to see you as you are here to-day. It may be a long time before you come to the Cape again."

It was an inadvertent speech, though quite expressive of her feelings, but she had no idea how anxious he was to obtain the insight it gave him.

"Would you like me to come often?" he queried.

"Of course," she answered, turning away her face; "it is so lonesome here, and there is no one I care to talk with except father and mother and Aunt Leach and Mandy Oaks."

Albert's heart began to beat with unusual speed. Never in his life before had he felt the impulse to utter words of love to any woman, and now he was face to face with the sweet though dreaded ordeal. For weal or woe, he could not go back and leave them unsaid. He had planned to say about what he had to Uncle Terry, beginning with a brief history of his life, his income, his hopes, and ending with asking her to share them. But the fortress of a woman's heart is seldom assailed that way, and with the queen

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of his, alone there beside him in that peaceful nook, where only the tiniest pulse of the ocean rippled on the rocks, he quite forgot his address to this fair judge and jury. "Telly," he said, "I promised to tell you a little story here to-day, but it's all said in a few words. I love you, and I want you to share my life and all that I can do to make you happy." A trifle incoherent, but expressive; and the answer?

For a moment, while the tide of feeling surged through that queen's heart, and into her cheeks, even to the tips of her ears, she was silent, and then as both her hands went to her face, she almost whispered, "Oh, no, no, I cannot! I can never leave father and mother alone here! It would break my heart!"

"But you do care a little for me, don't you, Telly?" he begged, trying to draw her hands away from her blushing face. "Just a little, Telly, only say a little, to give me hope."

And then, as one of the hands he was trying to gain was yielded, and as he softly stroked and then raised it to his lips, she turned her pleading eyes to him and said, "You won't be angry, will you? And you will come and see me once in a while, won't you? And let me paint a picture to give you when you come?"

It may have been the pain in his face added to her

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own desolation that overcame all else, for now she bowed her head and the tears came. "I thank you for so much, Telly," he answered tenderly, "and God bless you for it. I do not give you up and shall not, if I have to wait all my life for you. I can be patient if I only have hope." He brushed his face with one hand, and still holding hers, arose and drew her up. Then the bold wooer slyly put his arm around her waist, and as he drew her to him he whispered, "Just one, Telly, my sweetheart, to make this spot seem more sacred."

It was not refused.

It is no harm for a man to be refused; instead it is a beneficial tonic, and inevitably makes him realize how serious a step he is asking some good woman to take and how much it means to her. In Albert's case it was tempered by so many consolations, one at least of exquisite sweetness, that he did not really feel it a final refusal. That Telly's heart was very tender toward him he felt sure, and what is more, that in time he would overcome her one objection.

"Come out on the point, dear," he said as she tried to draw herself away, "so we can see the ocean better. I will tell you the story I promised last evening." He still held her a half prisoner, and when they were seated where the waves were beating

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almost at their feet, he began his recital. When he came to that portion in which Frye played a part, and ending in such a ghastly denouement, she shuddered.

"That is the one horrible part of taking your own life," she said, "to think how you will look and what those who find you will say. If I were to do such a thing I should first make sure no one would ever find me."

The remark startled him. "Telly," he said soberly, "do not ever think of such a thing. Would you, whose heart is so loving and tender, burden all those who know you with a lifelong sorrow?"

"No, no, not that way," she answered quickly, "only if those who love me were taken I should want to follow them; that is all. Please forget I said it." Then she told him her own brief history, and at last, after much coaxing, a little of the one sorrow of her life.

"Now I know," he said, "why you avoided speaking about the picture of the wreck the first time I came here." Then in a moment he added, "Telly, I want you to give it to me and let me take it away. I want it for two reasons: one is, it gave me the first hint of your life's history. And then I do not want you to look at it any more."

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"You may have it," she answered, smiling sadly; "it was foolish of me to paint it in the first place, and I wish I never had."

When the sun was low and they were ready to return he said, "Promise me, sweetheart, that you will try to forget all of your past that is sad, and think only of us who love you, and to whom your life is a blessing."

That evening he noticed Uncle Terry occasionally watched her with wistful eyes, and, as on the evening before, both he and Aunt Lissy retired early.

"They wish me well," Albert thought, and with gratitude. He had even more reason for it when the next day Uncle Terry proposed that Telly should drive to the head of the island in his place.

"I'm sorry ye must leave us, Mr. Page," he said, when Albert was ready to bid the old folks good-by. "I wish ye could stay longer; but cum again soon, an' remember, our latch-string's allus out fer ye."

When the old carryall had made half its daily journey, Albert pointed to a low rock and said, "There is a spot I shall always be glad to see, for it was there Uncle Terry first found me."

Telly made no answer; in fact she had said but little since they started, and soon the hardest part of life and living, that of separating from those who seem

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near and dear to us, was drawing near. When they reached the little landing, no one else was there. No house was in sight of it, and the solitude was broken only by the tide that softly caressed the barnacled piles of the wharf and the weed-covered rocks on either side. No boat was visible adown the wide reach that separates Southport Island from the mainland, and up it came a light sea breeze that barely rippled the flowing tide and whispered through the brown and scarlet leaved thicket back of them. Over all shone the hazy sunlight of October. It is likely that a touch of regret for the sacrifice she had made came to Telly as she stood listening and hoping that the boat which was due would be late in coming, for a look of sadness came over her face, and a more than usually plaintive appeal in her expressive eyes. "I am sorry you are going," she said; "it is so lonesome here, and it will seem more so now." Then as if that was a confession he might think unmaidenly, she added, "I dread to have the summer end, for when winter comes, the rocks all around seem like so many tombstones."

He was watching her as she spoke, and the little note of sorrow in her voice gave him a hope that she might relent at the last moment, and give him the promise he wanted so much. He put out his hand as if that would aid his appeal, and as his fingers closed

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over hers he said, "I am going away with a heavy heart, Telly, and when I can come back is hard to say. Will you not promise me that some time, no matter when, you will be my own good and true wife? Let me go away with that hope to comfort me while I work and save for a home for us both. Will you, Telly?"

But the plaintive face was turned away, perhaps to hide the tears. Then once more an arm stole around her waist, and as he drew her close, she whispered, "When I am no longer needed here, if you want me then I will come to you."

She was sobbing now, but her head was resting on his shoulder, and as he kissed her closed eyes and unresisting lips, a boat's sharp whistle broke the sacred spell.

"Go a little way back, my darling," he whispered, "until the boat is gone. I do not want any one to see you have been crying."

When her misty eyes could no longer see the boat that bore her heart away, she turned, and all the long, lonely way back love's tears lingered on her lashes.

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CHAPTER XXXVII

AMID FALLING LEAVES

THE mountains around Sandgate were aflame with the scarlet and gold of autumn before life seemed quite as usual to Alice Page. The summer idyl had passed, and though it left a scar on her heart, she had resolutely determined to put the sweet illusion out of her mind. "I was very foolish to let him see that I cared," she thought, "for it can never be, and by and by he will forget me, or if he does think of me, it will be to recall me as one of his summer girls who had a fit of silliness."

But for all that her heart ached at times, and in spite of all resolution her fingers would once in a while stray to the chords of "Ben Bolt." She tried, and fairly succeeded in answering his letters in a cool, matter-of-fact way. Occasionally when he referred to his heart hunger, and how hard he was studying in hopes that she might think better of him, she wished that he had no purse-proud and haughty mother to stand between him and a poor girl, and her next letter

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would be more chilly than ever. What perhaps was a bitter-sweet thought was the fact that the colder she answered him, the warmer his next letter would be. Unwisely, too, he happened to mention once that his mother had spoken of a certain young lady who belonged to the cream of Boston society as an eligible match, and advised him to show her a little attention. It was really of no moment, yet it hardened Alice against his mother, and did not help his cause.

Every Sunday she took her wonted place in the choir, and after church occasionally walked alone to the cemetery and visited her mother's grave. Then, too, her brother's letters grew less frequent, and that was a source of pain. With intuitive and feminine instinct she began to assume that some woman was winning his thoughts, and as it was but natural, she could not and did not mention her belief to him. How grateful she was all through those melancholy autumn days that she had a large school to absorb her thoughts, no one, not even Aunt Susan, guessed. She was having a long and hard fight with her own feelings and imagined she had conquered them, when Thanksgiving time drew near and her brother announced he would run up and spend the day with her. She almost cried for joy at the good news, for poor, pretty, and proud-spirited Alice Page was feel-

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ing very heart-hungry when the letter came. He was just a little surprised at her vehement welcome.

"Oh, I have been so lonesome, Bertie," she said when they were alone together, "and the evenings drag by so slowly! Then you do not write me as often or such nice letters as formerly, and Aunt Susan never seems to notice that I am blue. If it were not for my school, I should go crazy, I think."

His heart smote him as he thought of a certain other blue-eyed girl who was now occupying his thoughts to the partial exclusion of this loving sister, and of whom he had meant to tell Alice. In an instant it occurred to him that it would hurt her now to know it, and that he had best keep it to himself.

"I am very busy these days, sis," he replied, "and my mind is all taken up with work. Mr. Nason's business is increasing and I have a good many clients besides him." Then as if to draw her out, he added: "How did you like Blanch Nason?"

"Oh, she was very nice," replied Alice coolly, "and if she were a poor girl and lived here I could easily learn to love her. As it is, it is useless for me to think of her as a friend. It was good of her to pay me a visit, though, and I enjoyed every minute of it."

"And what about Frank?" queried Albert, eyeing

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his sister with a smile; "did he not say a lot of sweet things to you?"

Alice colored.

"Oh, he is nice enough," she answered, "and tried to make me believe he had fallen in love with me, but it won't do any good. I am sure his managing mamma will marry him to some thin girl with a fat purse, or aristocratic family, which, I imagine, is of more consequence to her."

Albert gave a low and prolonged whistle.

"So that is the way the wind blows, my sweet sister, is it?" he observed; "and yet my possible future law partner has been humming 'Ben Bolt' nearly every day for the past two months! I made believe you must have smiled on him very sweetly when he was here."

The thought of one day when she had done more than smile at this young man brought even a deeper color than before to her face.

"Please do not say any more about him, Bert," she answered with a little pain in her voice; "he is all right, but I am too poor and too proud to satisfy his mother, so that is all there is or ever will be to it." Then she added in self-protection, "Tell me about the island girl I heard you fell in love with on the yachting-trip, and for whom you deserted the

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crowd." It was his turn to look confused, and he did, in a way that smote his keen-eyed sister with sudden dread. "It is true, Bertie," she said quickly; "I can see it in your face. That explains your short letters." A little quiver passed over her lips and down the round chin like a tiny ripple on still water, and she added pathetically, "I hated to believe it, but it cannot be helped, I suppose. I shall feel more desolate now than ever." Then womanlike she said, "Is she very pretty, Bertie? She must be, or you would not have fallen in love with her so soon."

There was no use in concealment or evasion, and it was not like him to resort to either. "Alice, my sweet little sister," he replied, resolutely drawing his chair near and taking her hand, "it is true, and I intended to tell you all about it, only I hated to do it at first, and so put it off. She is more than pretty, she is beautiful, and the most unaffected and tender-hearted girl I ever met. But you need not worry. She is so devoted to the two old people who have brought her up as their own that she will not leave them for me as long as they live." Then he added regretfully, "So you see I must be a patient waiter for a long time yet." Then he frankly told Alice the entire story of his waif of the sea, and how even at the last moment she had refused to yield to his pleading.

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"And now, sweet sister," he said at last, "I have a plan to unfold, and I want you to consider it well. I am now earning enough to maintain a home, and I am sick and tired of boarding-house life. It is not likely I shall marry the girl I love for many years to come, and there is no need for us to be separated in this way. I think it is best that we close the house, or rent it for the present, and you and Aunt Susan come to Boston. I can hire a pretty flat, and we can take down such of the furniture as we need, and store the rest. What do you think of the plan?"

"Oh, I shall be so glad of the change, Bertie!" she answered, brightening; "it is so desolate here, and you do not know how I dread the long winter." And then she added quickly, "But what can I do in Boston? I cannot be idle; I should not be contented if I were."

"Will not housekeeping for me be occupation enough?" he answered, smiling, "or you might give music lessons and study shorthand. I need a typewriter even now, and in a few months must have one."

She was silent, considering the matter in its various bearings for a few moments, and then said: "But what will Aunt Susan think of the change, and it will be *such* a change for her; like going into a new world!"

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"Well, she will have to get used to it," he answered; "at any rate, it is not wise for us to go on in this way solely for her comfort."

Then, as Alice began to realize what it meant to bid good-by to the scenes of her childhood, the old home, the great trees in front, the broad meadows, the brook that rippled through them, the little church where every one greeted her with a smile, and the grand old hills that surrounded Sandgate's peaceful valley, her heart began to sink. Then she thought of the pleasant woods where she had so often gone nutting in autumn, the old mill-pond where every summer since babyhood she had gathered lilies, and even those barefooted school-children of hers, every one of whom had come to love the pretty teacher, came into her thoughts. Life in Sandgate did not seem so desolate to her as it had, and the thought of going away grew less attractive.

"I shall dislike to go, after all," she said at last, "but perhaps it is best. I shall cry when I leave here, I know, and be very homesick for a spell, but then I shall have you, and that is a good deal." Then this mingled clouds and sunshine of a girl deliberately rose, and like a big baby, crept into her brother's lap, and tucking her sunny head under his chin, whispered, "Oh, if you were never going to be

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married, Bertie, I would leave it all and try to be contented. I could come up here every summer, and go the rounds, could I not?" Then she added disconsolately, "But you will get married, and in less than a year, too. I know it. Your beautiful island girl cannot and will not keep you waiting so long. I could not if I were she, I know."

Then that big brother, blessed with such an adorable sister, raised her face so he could look into her blue eyes and said, "No sweetheart and no wife shall ever lessen my love for you, Alice, who have been my playmate, my companion, and my confidant all my life. And if you are likely to be homesick and unhappy in Boston, we will abandon the plan at once."

"Let me think about it a few weeks first," she replied. "I could not go away until this term of school is over, and that will not be till Christmas."

Then after those two good friends had discussed the proposed step in all its bearings for a half hour Albert said, "Come, now, sis, sing a little for me; I am hungry to hear you once more."

She complied willingly, and as the mischievous heartbreaker never forgot to pay an old score, the moment she was seated at the piano she began with "Hold the Fort," and singing every verse of that, followed it with "Pull for the Shore."

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Her brother never winced, and after she had inflicted two more of those well-worn gospel hymns upon him he quietly remarked, "My dear sis, you are not punishing me for what I once said half as much as you think you are. Sing some more of them; they sound like old times." And it was true, too.

The latest and most classic compositions are all very well for highly cultured ears afflicted with Wagnerian delirium; but for plain, ordinary country-born people, such as Albert was, there is a sweet association in the old songs first heard in childhood that no classic productions can usurp. The "Quilting Party" will surely recall some moonlight walk home with a boyhood sweetheart along a maple-shaded lane, when "on your arm a soft hand rested," and "Money Musk" will carry you back to a lantern-lit barn floor with one fiddler perched on a pile of meal bags; and how delightful it was to clasp that same sweet girl's waist when "balance and swing" came echoing from the rafters.

And so that evening, as the piquant voice of Alice Page trilled the list from "Lily Dale" to "Suwanee River" and back to "Bonny Eloise" and "Patter of the Rain," Albert lazily puffed his cigar and lived over his boyhood days.

When the concert was ended he exclaimed:

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"Do you know, sis, that an evening like this in Boston would seem like a little taste of heaven to me, after I came back from the all-day grind among hard-hearted, selfish men who think only of the mighty dollar! And now you see why I want you to come to Boston to live."

It pleased that loving sister of his wonderfully, for as yet her brother was far dearer than any other living person. No lover had so far usurped his place or seemed to her as likely to. She gave him a grateful look and smile that prompted him to say:

"Now I will look around before Christmas and see what kind of a flat can be found, and then when your school closes you must come down and visit me and see how you like Boston."

"Oh, that will be just delightful," was the rejoinder, "only you must promise not to tell the Nasons that I am coming."

"But if they find it out, Blanch and Frank would feel bitterly hurt," he replied; "remember, they did you the honor of coming up here to visit you, and Blanch has said to me several times that she hoped you would visit her this winter."

"I should love to," replied Alice, hesitating, "but — well, I will tell you what we can do: we will wait until the day before I am to return, and then we

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can call there one evening. They need not know how long I have been in Boston."

Albert looked curiously at his sister. "I think I understand you, sis," he observed, "and that is right; but is it not a little rough on Frank? He has settled down to hard study and sticks to it, and really is an exemplary young man and a good fellow. I am growing very fond of him, and should dislike to have you actually offend him."

"I do not want to offend him, by any means," said Alice soberly, "and neither do I want him or his haughty mother to think I am disposed to put myself in his way. If he wants to see me, let him come here."

The next day Albert and Alice felt obliged to attend church, as all the good people of Sandgate usually so observed Thanksgiving day, and he was gladdened by many a cordial handshake and kindly inquiry from old friends. Alice as usual sang in the choir, and when the services were over they returned, to find that Aunt Susan had the honored emblem of the day well browned and ready for the table. In a way the meal was a trifle saddened, for in spite of the good cheer, it brought back to all three recollections of those who would never more be present. And that evening both brother and sister called on

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Abby Miles, more to escape the home mood than to enjoy her society.

When morning and departure came Albert said: "I will do as you wish, sweet sister, and unless some of the Nasons should meet us at a theatre, I imagine it will work all right. Only it is a little rough on Frank, after all."

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CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE OLD SONGS

INFLUENCED by time, place, and the earnest pleading of her admirer, Alice Page had, on that summer afternoon by the mill-pond, stepped a little from her pedestal of pride. In a way, too, her feelings were touched, at least enough to give her many an hour's heartache afterwards while she was resolutely putting the sweet illusion out of her mind. But no one, not even her brother, knew it, and only Aunt Susan suspected, and she wisely kept her counsel, hoping that all would come right in the end.

The proposed change did not seem to disturb her much, although Alice noticed that she was more quiet than ever and avoided that subject.

"I'm ready an' willin' to go if you think best," she said; "and I'll do my best as long as I can. I hain't got long to stay, and if I see you two happy, I'm content."

It was the pathos of old age, and it touched Alice's heart.

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Two weeks before Christmas came a cordial letter from Blanch, reminding Alice of her promise to visit her during the holidays and insisting that she do so now. With it was enclosed an equally cordial but brief note of invitation from Mrs. Nason. Alice replied to both in due form and with profuse thanks, also stating that she had promised her brother she would visit him during her vacation, and hoped to have one or two evenings with them at that time.

"I will let them see I am not a deserted tabby-cat," she said to herself, "waiting around in the cold until some one opens a door for me." And then this proud little country girl enclosed both notes to her brother and told him he had best inform the Nasons of her intended visit in a matter-of-fact way. "But mind," she added, "you do not let on that you know they have invited me to visit them. We will do just as we talked, go there and spend one or two evenings, or perhaps I may meet them at a theatre, which would be much better."

By return mail came his assurance of obedience and a sizable check. "Use it all, my dear sis," he wrote, "and for your own needs, too. I do not want you to feel ashamed of your gowns when you come to Boston."

"Bless his dear heart," said Alice, when she read

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the letter, "what a prize that island girl will get in him!" And then she came near crying at the thought of that possible outcome. But when Christmas came and she kissed Aunt Susan good-by, she was near giving up the trip altogether. It may have been the sad face of her aunt that brought the irresolution, or a feeling that meeting Frank would re-awaken the little heartache she had for five months been trying to conquer; for this proud girl had firmly made up her mind that she would utter a very decided "no" if Frank proposed again. When she reached Boston she was met by her brother, and for three days he devoted his entire time to her.

"I have not told Frank, even, when you were coming," he observed, "and shall not let them know you are here until we call." Then he added, smiling, "I want you to myself for a few days, because after Frank knows you are here I am sure to be one too many most of the time."

"Not on his account, you'll not be," replied Alice with a snap, and it is likely that moment she meant it too.

And what a gallant escort that brother was! And what a change from the dull monotony of her home life those days were to Alice!

They hunted for houses and visited art galleries

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mornings, lunched at Parker's at noon, and devoted the afternoons and evenings to theatres. Then after that usually a *tête-à-tête* supper at a cozy place where the best was to be had, and a little chat in his or her room before retiring. It was during one of these brief visits that she noticed some of the pictures that hung in his room.

"Who painted that shipwreck scene?" she asked, looking at one. "It is a gem, and those poor sailors clinging to the ice-covered rigging are enough to make one shiver. And those awful waves, too, are simply terrifying. And what a pretty scene is this wild tangle of rocks with a girl leaning on one and looking out on the ocean where the sun is setting or rising," she continued as she viewed the next one. Then as she examined it a little closer she added, "Who is E. T.?" Albert made no answer and she passed to a third one showing a little rippled cove with the ocean beyond and a girl seated in the shade of a small spruce tree.

"Why, this is by E. T. too," she exclaimed, and turning to her brother she repeated, "who is E. T.?"

"Well," he answered, "I will take you down to the island some time and introduce you to her. She will be glad to meet my sister, you may be certain."

Then it all flashed over Alice, and the brief history

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of this girl, as her brother had told it, came back to her in an instant. "So that was the wreck she floated ashore from, was it, Bert?" she asked; "and can she paint like that? Why, I am astonished! And who is the girl leaning on the rock?" she added; "and what an exquisitely molded figure! And what a pretty pose! Who is she?"

"That is your possible sister-in-law," answered Albert with a touch of pride, "and the pictures were done by her from sketches I first made myself. They are true to life so far as all details go, only I failed to catch her expressive face in the one that shows a front view of her."

"And so that was the way you wooed your island goddess, was it?" observed Alice with a roguish look; "made her pose for a sketch while you said sweet things to her." Then with a woman's curiosity she added, "Have you a picture of her?"

"No, I am sorry to say I have not," he replied; "remember, she has been hidden away on an island all her life, and I doubt if she ever had a picture taken."

"And when will you take me to see her?" asked Alice. "I am so anxious to meet this fairy of the shore who has stolen my brother's heart. Can't we go down there before I return home?"

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"We can," he added, "but I think we'd better wait until spring."

The next day he informed her he had secured a box at the Tremont for that evening, and had invited the Nasons to join them. "I thought it would relieve your mind a little, Alice," he added, "to meet your bogie on neutral ground." And it did.

But Mrs. Nason was a long way from being the haughty spectre Alice had conjured up, and like many excellent mothers was simply interested to see that her only and impetuous son did not make a mésalliance. While she had wisely made no comment regarding her son's apparent disappointment, what Blanch had said, together with that fact, had won for Alice a respect she was totally unaware of. That a poor and pretty country schoolma'am was proud enough to discourage that son's attentions because of the difference in their positions was an unusual experience to her and one that awakened her curiosity. "I should like to meet Miss Page," she said to Blanch when the latter had asked if she might invite her to visit them, "and see what she is like. A girl that shows the spirit she does is certainly worth cultivating, and as she entertained you so nicely, by all means let us return the obligation."

When Alice's cool but polite note reached Mrs.

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Nason, she was piqued to even a greater degree of curiosity, and when Albert's courteous letter, inviting "Mrs. Nason and family to share a box at the Tremont for the purpose of meeting my sister" was received, she returned a cordial acceptance by bearer.

To Alice the proposed meeting was a source of dread, and when the carriage called for Albert and herself she was in an excited state of mind, and maybe it was not all on account of Mrs. Nason either. They had barely taken their seats in the box, and the orchestra had only just begun the overture, when the usher knocked and Blanch, followed by the rest of the family, entered. That young lady greeted Alice with an effusive kiss at once, and the next instant she found herself shaking hands with a rotund and gray-haired lady of dignified bearing, but of very kind and courteous manner. An introduction to Edith followed, and then Frank acknowledged her polite "How do you do, Mr. Nason?" with his very best bow.

Their meeting was the most formal of any, as Alice evidently wished it to be, since she did not offer her hand, and then she insisted that Mrs. Nason and her two daughters occupy the front chairs.

"You are our guests this evening," said Alice with quiet dignity, when Blanch urged her to take one, "and so must pardon me for insisting."

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Then the play began, and by the time the first act was over Alice had taken a mental inventory of her "bogie" and made up her mind that she was no bogie at all. When the curtain fell, Mrs. Nason began chatting with Alice in the pleasantest way possible, and with seemingly cordial interest in all she said, while Blanch wisely kept quiet and Edith devoted herself to Albert. It was after the second curtain when Mrs. Nason said: "I must insist that you divide your visit with us, Miss Page, and allow us to return a little of your hospitality. Of course I understand that your brother comes first, and rightly too, but we must claim a part of your time."

"I had promised myself one or two evenings at your home," Alice answered quietly, "but I do not feel that I ought to desert Bertie more than that."

Then for the first time Blanch put in her little word: "Now do not offer your brother as an excuse," she said, "for it will not do a bit of good. I have been anticipating your promised visit for a long time, and no brother is going to rob me of it. I shall come around to-morrow forenoon with the coachman, and if you are not ready to go back with me, bag and baggage, I will take your baggage, and then you will have to come."

Alice smiled at this vehement cordiality.

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"I do not see why you cannot see your brother and visit with him just as well at our house," put in Mrs. Nason; "he is always welcome there, and he knows it, I am sure."

Alice turned to her brother, remarking: "It is nice of you to insist, and I am more than grateful, but it must be as he says." Then she added prettily: "He is my papa and mamma now, and the cook and captain bold, and mate of the 'Nancy' brig as well."

"I will stir up a mutiny on the 'Nancy' brig if he does not consent," laughed Blanch, "so there is an end to that; and you must be ready at ten to-morrow."

"Well, what do you think of the 'haughty mother' now?" observed Albert, after the Nasons had rolled away in their carriage. "Is she the awful spectre you imagined?"

"Oh, she's nice enough," answered Alice, "only it is just as well to let her see I need a little urging."

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CHAPTER XXXIX

SOCIETY

THREE more days of Alice's visit in Boston had passed, and quickly to her. Blanch had kept her threat, and literally taken possession of her new friend, and installed her in the guest room of the Nason residence. Then she set out to entertain Alice to the best of her ample ability. To be taken in hand, as it were, by a highly cultured and wealthy young lady, and to have a liveried and obsequious coachman on duty to convey them anywhere and everywhere, was a new experience, and a decided change from Sandgate. The two went shopping mornings, and to matinées or made calls afternoons, or discussed styles and effects with modistes; evenings it was a theatre or else a quiet evening at home, when Mr. Nason was in evidence. As for Frank, he was barely allowed the privilege of procuring tickets and buying bonbons, or else making one of a rubber of whist. "Don't you dare to say any sweet things while she is here," Blanch had cautioned him at the outset. "In the first place it is not

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good form, and in the second it would offend her. Be as gallant as you know how, but do not let mamma see that you are any more attentive to Alice than to Ede and I. If you hope to win your pretty school-ma'am you must pay your court in her own home, not here." It is needless to say Frank obeyed. It was not long ere Alice began to feel herself quite at home in the Nason family, and to notice that Mrs. Nason treated her in a motherly way which was both nice and kind. That excellent lady also expressed a warm sympathy for Alice in her orphaned condition, and showed an interest in her occupation at home.

"I see that you are fond of your little charges," she said, after Alice had described her school and some of the peculiarities of her pupils who wore outgrown roundabouts or calico pinafores, "and I suppose they grow fond of you as well."

"I try to make them," replied Alice, "and I find that is the easiest way to govern them. I seldom have to punish any one, and when I do it hurts me more than the culprit. In a way, children are like grown people and a little tact and a few words said in the right way are more potent than fear of punishment."

"And do you not find life in so small a place rather monotonous?" asked Mrs. Nason.

"Oh, yes," replied Alice, "it is not much like city

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life as I understand it; but having lived in the country all my life, as I have, I am accustomed to it and do not mind. It is delightful to have theatres and the excitement of social duties, as I imagine you have all the time, and yet I am not sure I should like it. I fancy once in a while I should sigh for a shady spot in the woods in summer where I could read a book or hear the birds sing. It is only in winter that I should like to live in the city."

But the pleasant days of Alice's stay in Boston passed rapidly until only two were left, when Blanch said to her, "I have invited a few of my friends here to meet you to-night, and I want you to do me a favor, and that is, sing for me."

"Oh, please do not ask that," replied Alice hastily. "I do not sing well enough, and fear that some of your friends might be critics, and that would quite upset me."

"But you sing in church," assented Blanch, "and that is much harder."

"That is nothing," answered Alice, smiling; "not one in ten of those country people know one note from another, and that fact makes me indifferent. Here not only all your people, but all your friends, hear the finest operatic singers, and poor I would cut a sorry figure in contrast."

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"But you will sing just once to please me, won't you?" pleaded Blanch.

"I will not promise," was the answer; "I will see how many are here and how my courage holds out."

When that evening came Blanch waited until Alice had become somewhat acquainted with the little gathering and the reserve had worn away, when she went to her and putting one arm around her waist, whispered, "Come, now, dear, just one little song; only one to please me." At first Alice thought to refuse, but somehow the pride that was in her came to the rescue, and the feeling that she would show her friend that she was not a timid country girl gave her the needed courage, and she arose and stepped across the room to the grand piano that stood in one corner. Her cheeks were flushed, and a defiant curl was on her lips, and then without a moment's hesitation she seated herself and sang "The Last Rose of Summer." She had sung it many, many times before, and every trill and exquisite quiver of its wondrous pathos was as familiar to her as the music of the brook where she had played in childhood. I am not certain but some of that brook's sweet melody came as an inspiration to her, for now she sang as she never had before, and to an audience that listened entranced.

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When the last sweet note had passed her red lips she arose quickly and returned to her seat; and then, had she not been so modest that she dared not look at any one, she would have seen two little tears steal out of Mrs. Nason's eyes, to be quickly brushed away with a priceless bit of lace. Sweet Alice, the motherless little country girl, had from that moment entered the heart of Mrs. Nason and won a regard she hardly realized then; in fact, not at all until long afterward. When the applause had subsided it was Frank that next pleaded.

"Won't you sing one for me now, Miss Page?" he asked. "I bought the song I wanted to-day," and going to the piano he unrolled and spread upon the music rack — "Ben Bolt"!

"But I only consented to sing once for Blanch," Alice replied, "and there are others here who I am sure can do much better."

"Come, please," he said coaxingly, "just this one for me." And then once more Alice touched the keys.

Back to a simply furnished parlor in Sandgate, with its lamp on the piano and open fire burning brightly as it had one year ago, went two of that company in thought, and maybe others there, whose youth had been among country scenes, were carried back to

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them by the singer's voice, and saw a byway schoolhouse "and a shaded nook by a running brook," in fancy; or perhaps a little white stone in some grass-grown corner, where, "obscure and alone," lay a boyhood's sweetheart! For all the pathos of our lost youth trilled in the voice of Alice Page as she sang that old, old song of the long ago. And not one in that little audience but was enthralled by the winsome witchery of her voice, and for the moment was young again in thought and feeling. As for Mrs. Nason, when the guests had departed she turned to Alice, and taking her face in her hands exclaimed, "I want to kiss the lips that have brought tears to my eyes to-night."

Sweet Alice had won her crown.

The last evening of her visit she decided to spend with her brother, and when she came to bid adieu to her hostess, that much dreaded haughty mother had resolved herself into a charming old lady, who said: "Now I can see why my daughter went into raptures over some one who I hope will visit us again and stay much longer." It was a graceful tribute, and one that touched the motherless girl as few words could.

"It is odd, Bertie," she said to her brother that evening, when they were alone together, "how differ-

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rent people seem when one comes to know them. Now from one or two things which you have said, and an admission that Frank made a year ago, I felt I should be sure to hate his mother, and now I think she is perfectly lovely."

"So she is to those she likes," answered Albert, "but if you had not shown the tact you have, my dear sis, I am not sure you would now be praising her. You carried her heart by storm last evening, as well as the rest of the company, and you deserved it, for I never heard you sing so well."

"I am glad I didn't break down, anyway," she replied, "for when I touched the piano my heart seemed in my mouth."

"Yes, and in your voice, too," he replied with pride, "and that is what carried us all away."

For an hour they discussed the Nasons, while Albert noticed his sister avoided any mention of Frank, and then he said: "Well, sis, which of the rents we have looked at do you think I best engage and when will you be ready to move?"

Alice was silent and for a few minutes she pursed her lips and looked at the chilly shipwreck scene near her as if it contained a revelation.

"I am not so sure," she answered finally, "that we should make the change at present. If I were certain

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your beautiful waif of the sea would adhere to her filial resolution, it would be different, but I am not. If you secure this legacy for her that you told me about and she donates it to those old people, as you say she intends to, why the next thing will be an invitation to my dear brother's wedding, and that is one reason why I hesitate to make this change. Another is that I do not think it would be good for Aunt Susan. She says she is ready and willing, but when she has left all the associations of her life behind, she will just sit and grieve her poor old heart away in silence."

Albert did not and could not answer all these surmises, and to a certain extent he felt that his sister was right. He certainly meant to coax Telly to marry him, even if she insisted on spending most of her time where she felt her duty called her. Then he had felt all along that Alice might be persuaded to become one of the Nason family, though his Thanksgiving visit had about dispelled that idea. As for Aunt Susan, if the proposed change was not likely to be a permanent one, it would not be best to make it at all. Deliberating thus he sat in silence for a time, and leisurely puffed smoke rings in the air as he studied the ceiling. Finally an idea came to him.

"My dear sister," he said, "have you considered

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or do you consider Frank in your calculations? and if so, where does he come in, may I ask?"

Alice's blue eyes assumed an expression like unto a pansy, and her face the placidity of a mill-pond as she answered, "I had quite forgotten his existence!"

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CHAPTER XL

"YES OR NO"

A WOMAN'S heart, as transitory as the wind, as evanescent as the rainbow, and as tender as spring violets, is hard to portray with pen, and for that reason the summer-day nature of Alice Page is but faintly outlined. When on the morning of her departure from Boston she stood beside the train exchanging the usual good-by words with her brother, she was surprised at being joined by Blanch and Frank. The former brought her a tasty basket of lunch, sent with her mother's compliments, and the latter an elaborate bouquet of flowers.

"I want to kiss you good-by," said Blanch, and when the two had embraced and Frank had uttered a suitable speech, Alice kissed her brother and took her seat. No one apparently noticed that Frank was not on the platform when the train started, and when it was well under way Alice was astonished to see him enter the car. She was, as may be expected, feeling rather blue, and the sight of his cheerful face was a pleasant surprise.

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"You will not object to my company home, will you?" he asked at once; "I thought you might be lonesome, and as I have not had a chance to talk to you since you came to Boston, I decided to go up with you. I can come back on the night train," he added rather apologetically, "or if you prefer to ride alone, I can get off at the next station."

"Oh, no, I am very glad of your company," she replied sincerely, "and it was good of you to think of it. It is a long ride and I have had such a nice time I should have been disconsolate. You did not know," she added archly, "that one reason I came to Boston was to look at rents. Bert wants us to come here and keep house for him, Aunt Susan and me."

"And are you going to do it?" put in Frank, with sudden interest; "I hope so, for that would give me a chance to take you to the theatres."

"No, the plan is off for the present," she answered; "not but that I would like to, but for many reasons, one of which is Aunt Susan, we think it is not best."

Frank was a little ill at ease, and in a way did not feel certain he was welcome. Even without his sister's advice he would not have considered it good taste to press his suit while Alice was their guest. But now it occurred to him that to escort her home would be a wise move. "By all means go back with

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her," Blanch had replied when he broached his idea, "and by the time you have reached Sandgate you will know where you stand in your schoolma'am's feelings. She knows, too, how mamma feels towards her, so that obstacle is removed. And if there is any hope for you, you will know it soon; only as I told you once before, wait until the right moment comes, and then woo her quickly and courageously."

For an hour they trundled along through the snow-clad country chatting commonplaces, and then Alice said: "Did you meet the island girl last summer that you told me Bert had fallen in love with?"

"Only once," he replied. "Bert invited her and the old lady on board the 'Gypsy' and introduced them. They remained only long enough to look the yacht over. I left that day for Bethlehem, and as you know, came to Sandgate." His eyes were on her as he said this, and he noticed that an added color came to her face.

"What did you think of this girl?" asked Alice hastily; "tell me what she looks like — is she handsome?"

It is a woman's usual question, and a hard one for a man to answer, especially if the one who asks it is the girl he adores.

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"She has a beautiful figure," he answered, "and eyes like yours, which you know are what I admire; only they are not so full of mischief. They have a far-away look that makes you think her thoughts are a thousand miles away."

"How was she dressed?" was the next query.

"Oh, I haven't the least idea," was the answer; "she might have worn calico for all I could tell. The only thing I can remember is that her dress was tight-fitting and very plain."

Alice smiled.

"Those far-away eyes must have entranced you, your description is so lucid," she replied sarcastically. Then she added: "How long did Bert stay there after you came away?"

"Only a few days," replied Frank; "I never asked him. I told him to keep and use the 'Gypsy' as long as he wanted and then I cut stick for Blanch and — Sandgate."

He seemed to dwell upon the little outing, and Alice, noticing it, and evasive ever, fought shy of the subject. She saw also that he was not aware of her brother's infatuation and from motives of delicacy forbore further questioning.

"Well, how do you like my haughty mother now?" he asked, "if that is a fair question."

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It was not exactly a fair question, but conscious of the fact that she had tried to quiz him, Alice answered it frankly.

"I think she is the most gracefully charming hostess I ever met," she replied, "and you ought to be proud of her. In a way, I think you conveyed a wrong impression of her to me the first time I met you, and it has lasted ever since."

"I am sorry if I did," replied Frank honestly, "I did not mean to. Mother knows how to be very nice to any one she likes and very freezing to any one she doesn't. She fell in love with you the night you sang, and I knew she would. That is why I almost begged you on my knees to sing," he added earnestly, "so please do not scold me for, as you say, giving a wrong impression."

"I did not mean to scold you, Frank," she replied, "and if I hurt you, please forgive me." It was the first time she had ever used his first name and it made his heart beat high with hope. He would have there and then whispered of that hope, had it not been for his sister's advice to wait for the right moment, and it was wise that he heeded that advice. When noon came he bought a pitcher of coffee all prepared, at a railroad lunch counter, and a cup and saucer, then spread a newspaper between them, and over it a nap-

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kin, and while she ate he held the cup and shared the edibles. It was not a gracefully eaten lunch, and yet it served to brush away much of the restraint that lay between them. When the hills of Sandgate were visible he said, "I have an hour before the returning train, and just time enough to see you safely home."

Alice looked at him with surprise.

"And that is your idea of my hospitality," she exclaimed, "to let you go away like that? The morning train is the earliest one you can escape on, and if I am not good enough company for you this evening, you can go and call on Abby Miles."

And what a surprised and glad old lady Aunt Susan was when the two stepped off the train, and how vividly Frank recalled one year ago when he and Albert met Alice at this same cheerless depot with its one small waiting-room and adjoining shed! The same staid horse was hitched outside, and as he bundled his two charges into the sleigh and officiously took the reins, while Aunt Susan lamented because she had not known he was coming, "so's to hev suthin' fit to eat in the house," he felt he was master of the situation.

"Don't mind me, Aunt Susan," he said with easy familiarity; "I am not a visitor, I am a big brother escorting a lone sister home."

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And how kindly that wrinkled face beamed on him behind her spectacles while he insisted that she stand by and let him unharness and see to the horse as she directed! And how willingly he carried baskets of wood in and started the parlor fire, and joked and jested with her regarding his ability as an assistant!

It warmed her old heart in a wonderful way, for her husband and only son had long years ago been laid at rest in the village "God's acre," and it seemed so nice to her to be noticed at all.

Then the best blue china was none too good for this event, and the hot biscuits must be made and a jar of peach preserves opened, some cold tongue sliced, and by the time Alice had changed her garb and appeared in a house-dress, he and Aunt Susan were the best of friends. It was all an odd and new experience to him, and so anxious was he to win the favor of those two people that he did not even stop to think what any of his club friends would say could they have peeped into the old-fashioned country home and seen him helping Aunt Susan. Even Alice had to laugh when she saw what he was doing.

"I did not know you could make yourself so useful," she observed, "for even my beloved brother was never known to help aunty set the table."

But she knew well enough what inspired him, and

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when supper was over he began asking her all manner of questions about her school, and when she meant to open it again, how the old miller was, and what had become of the boat, and how the mill-pond looked in winter, and had she been there since the day she gathered lilies. "Always back to that spot," she thought, and colored a little.

Then later when she opened the piano she knew just what songs he expected, but, disposed now to tease him, sang just their opposites, and all the while the clock ticked the happy hours away.

It was ten ere he could coax her to favor him with one that suited his mood, and when he asked her for "The Last Rose of Summer" she exclaimed with a pretty pout:

"I do not want to sing that, Frank; it reminds me how scared I was when I sang it last."

"But you brought tears into most of our eyes that night," he answered, "so you may well feel proud of your effort."

"Do you want to weep again?" she asked archly, looking up at him and smiling; "if you say you do, I will sing it."

"No," he answered, and then hesitating a moment added, "I do not feel that way to-night. I may when train-time comes to-morrow."

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Her eyes fell, for she saw what was in his thoughts, and rising quickly, like a scared bird anxious to escape, turned away.

But a strong hand clasped one of hers, and then she heard him say, "Am I to go away to-morrow happy or miserable? You know what I came up here to ask. You know what I have worked and studied and waited for all the long year since first I saw you, and for whom I have tried to become a useful man in the world instead of an idler. It was to win you and to ask this that I came here to-day."

Then she felt an arm clasp her waist, and a voice that trembled a little say:

"Answer me, sweet Alice, is it yes or no?"

And then he felt her supple form yield a trifle, and as he gathered her close in his arms her proud head touched his shoulder.

He had won his sweet Alice.

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CHAPTER XLI

AN HEIRESS

THE winter had passed and March returned when one morning Albert received a bulky envelope bearing the Stockholm postmark, and containing numerous legal papers and a lengthy letter, all of which imparted information both surprising and pleasant. So interesting was it that he did not notice Frank when he came in, or even hear his greeting, and well might Albert be keenly absorbed in those documents, for they made him the emissary privileged to lay at the feet of the girl he loved — a fortune!

No more need she devote herself to her foster-parents for many years to come, and no more need Uncle Terry putter over lobster traps in rain or shine, or good, patient Aunt Lissy bake, wash, and mend, year in and year out.

Here was enough and more than they could spend in all the years that were left them, and what a charming privilege it would be to him to place in her loving hand the means to make glad and bless those kindly

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people who, all unasked, had cared for her as their own; and what a sweet door of hope it opened for him! He could hardly wait for the moment when he should say to her, "Here is the golden key that unlocks the world for you and yours."

Then for the first time he noticed Frank watching him with smiling interest.

"Well," remarked that cheerful young man, "I'm glad to see you emerge from your trance and return to earth again. I've said good morning twice, and watched you for half an hour, and you didn't even know I was in the room."

When Frank had perused the most interesting of the documents he gave a low whistle, and with his rather startling faculty for jumping at conclusions, said:

"Now, methinks, somebody will be taking a wedding-trip to the Land of the Midnight Sun in the near future. I congratulate you, my dear boy, and you can have the 'Gypsy' when you are ready." Then he added shyly, "Maybe it can be arranged so that there can be four in the party."

The next morning Albert, bearing the legal evidence of Telly's heritage, and with buoyant heart, left for Southport. The day was dark, and when, late in the afternoon, the little boat bearing him as sole pas-

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senger halted at the head of the island and he saw the smiling face and muffled form of Uncle Terry standing on the wharf alone, he could hardly wait to leap ashore.

"Bless yer heart, Mr. Page," exclaimed Uncle Terry, grasping both of Albert's hands in his, "but the sight o' ye is good fur sore eyes."

"And how are Aunt Lissy and Telly?" responded Albert, smiling into the glowing face of the old man.

"Oh, they're purty middlin', an' they'll be powerful glad to see ye, too. It's been a long time since ye left us."

And how vividly at this moment came to Albert every detail of his last parting from Telly, framed as she was then in a background of scarlet and brown foliage! He could see her as he last saw her, standing there with bowed head and tear-wet face, and feel a tinge of the keen pain that pulled at his own heart-strings then. He could almost hear the sad rustle of the autumn winds in the dry leaves all about that had added a pathos to their parting.

And now only a few miles separated them!

But the way was long and Uncle Terry's old horse slow, and the road in the hollows a quagmire of half-frozen mud. Gone were all the leaves of the scrub

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oaks, and beneath the thickets of spruce still remained a white pall of snow. A half gale was blowing over the island, and when they reached the hilltop that overlooked the Cape, it was so dark that only scattered lights showed where the houses were. When they halted in front of Uncle Terry's home the booming of the giant billows filled the night air, and by the gleam of the lighthouse rays Albert could see the spray tossed high over the point rocks.

"Go right in," said Uncle Terry, "an' don't stop ter knock; ye'll find the wimmin folks right glad ter see ye, an' I'll take keer o' the hoss."

With Telly it had been a long, dreary, desolate, monotonous winter. Her only consolation had been the few letters from the one and only man who had ever uttered a word of love to her, and how eagerly they had been read again and again, and then treasured as priceless keepsakes, he little realized. Neither did he know how many times she had lived over each and every hour they had passed together, and recalled every word and look and smile.

At times, when the cold desolation of winter was at its worst, she had half regretted the sacrifice she had made, and only maidenly reserve had kept her from writing him that her loneliness and heart-hunger were more than she could bear.

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She had no inkling of his coming on that dark and tempestuous evening, and when Uncle Terry bade him enter the house, she was alone in the sitting-room laying the table, while Aunt Lissy was in the kitchen cooking supper. And then, just as she paused to listen to the thunder of the giant waves, so near, she heard the click of the front door latch, and stepping quickly into the little hall, as the door slowly opened, she met the man who for five long months had never been absent from her thoughts one moment.

A glad cry escaped her, and then —

But such a moment is too sacred for words; only it must be said it was fortunate for both that Aunt Lissy was in the kitchen.

When that worthy soul came in and greeted Albert as cordially almost as a mother, if she noticed Telly's red face and neck no one was the wiser, and maybe it was due to the cheerful open fire after all.

And what a happy little party that was when Uncle Terry came in, and after Telly, as usual, had brought his house coat and slippers, and they were seated at the table! What mattered that the ocean surges thundered so near, and at times tossed their angry tears against the windows! Inside was light, and warmth, and love, and trust, and all that is holiest and best in human emotions.

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And when the meal was eaten, Uncle Terry and Albert smoked and talked while the fire burned bright, and the little clock on the mantel ticked the time away as clocks are bound to do, no matter how content we are.

When Albert had asked about the Widow Leach and Bascom, Deacon Oaks and Mandy, heard all the little gossip of the Cape, and given his isolated friends a brief synopsis of current events in the great world of which they could hardly be considered a part, and the evening was two-thirds past, he said:

"Now, my good friends, I have a little surprise in store for you," and drawing from an inside pocket a bulky envelope, rising and crossing the room to where Telly sat, he handed it to her with the remark:

"I have the honor and exquisite pleasure of presenting to you, Miss Etelka Peterson, sole surviving heiress and descendant of one Eric Peterson, of Stockholm, your paternal grandfather, these legal documents certifying to your inheritance of about one hundred and thirty thousand dollars, besides various pieces of real estate as yet unappraised."

The effect of this announcement upon the three listeners was unique and not exactly what Albert had anticipated. For an instant they seemed dazed, and Telly, holding the big envelope gingerly, as if it might

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bite her, stared at Albert with a look of fright. Aunt Lissy was the first to speak, and "Good Lord-a-massy" came from her in an awed whisper.

"Thank God, little girlie, you've got yer dues at last," was Uncle Terry's remark, and then, as the probable end of Telly's life with them cast its shadow athwart his vision, he bowed his face upon his hands and added in a pained voice: "I knowed it 'ud come an' we'd lose ye, soon or late."

The pathos of his act and words, with the overwhelming disclosure, seemed to force upon Telly the belief that in some unknown way it meant the ending of her present home life. For one instant she looked at him, and then the tide of emotion swept her to his side and kneeling there she thrust the envelope into his hands and clasped his arm.

"I won't take it, father," she said quickly, "not one penny of it! It's all yours, and I'll never leave you so long as you live, and no one can make me!" Then as the tide ebbed, her head sank upon his knee and she began to sob.

"Thar ain't no cause fur worryin' 'bout that yit, girlie," he answered, placing one hand on her bowed head, "an' no need fur ye to leave us 'thout ye mind to. We want ye allus, long as we kin keep ye, make sure." Then noting the dumfounded look on

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Albert's face he added, "Ye mustn't mind Telly's ways, Mr. Page, it's upset her a little an' made her histeriky. She don't quite understand, yit, what it all means. She ain't much used ter havin' a fortin drapped in her lap."

To Albert the climax was not what he anticipated. If this heritage did not relieve her sense of filial duty, he thought, what chance would his love have? But Uncle Terry was wiser than the rest.

"Don't mind what I said, girlie," he continued, stroking her bowed head and looking into the slowly dying fire as if it contained a prophecy. "It was an inadvartance." And then rising and lifting the girl tenderly, he added, "We'd best go to bed now, Lissy, an' mebbe Mr. Page, bein' a lawyer, can 'splain matters to Telly."

When they had left the room Albert seated himself on the sofa to which the girl had gone, and said: "I am a trifle puzzled and a little disappointed, Telly, at the way you feel about this inheritance. It is rightfully yours and will enable you to do much for the future comfort of those you are devoted to. I had hoped, also, it would relieve your feeling of obligation a little."

"No money can do that," she answered quickly, "and all this won't be worth to father the care he has

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grown accustomed to from me. It was his feeling that I was likely to leave him, though, that upset me, and then that name you called me by hurt a little."

"Still the same Chinese wall of filial duty," thought Albert, and growing desperate at the prospect of possible years of waiting and heart-hunger he continued:

"But won't this money do more for them than you can, Telly? Is there any need of his remaining here to putter over lobster traps and drive a wagon, rain or shine? He is getting too old for that, anyway. Why not build a home for them in Boston, or better still, share ours there?"

It was the first suggestion of what was nearest his heart, and a flush came over Telly's face.

"We haven't a home there yet," she answered, turning her face away.

"But we will have, darling," he answered quickly, seizing the opening, "and as soon as you consent I shall begin to make it ready. It is folly," he added hurriedly, as if to forestall any negation, "for us to go on this way any longer. I want you, darling, and I want a home. Life to me, with you buried here, is only desolation, and how much so to you, the past five months can only tell. I know how you feel

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toward these good people, and your care for them shall be my care."

Once more Telly hid her face behind her hands, the better to think, perhaps, or to hide rebellious tears. And now she felt herself gathered within strong arms and a hand making both hers prisoners, and as she yielded a little to his clasp he whispered: "Do not say 'no' again, Telly! Do not rob yourself and me of love and home and happiness any longer! Make what plans for them you wish; do as you will with your heritage; all I plead for is you. Must I be deprived of my hoped-for happiness." It was an eloquent plea, and the last suggestion of the morrow's parting won the victory, for as he paused, holding her close while he waited for her answer, only listening love heard it whispered.

And outside, the billows that years before tossed her ashore, and had woven their monotone of sadness into her life, still tolled their requiem, but she heard them not. She had entered the enchanted castle of illusions.

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CHAPTER XLII

THE PATHOS OF LIFE

WHEN June had again clad Sandgate's hills and village with green, and spangled its meadows with daisies, there occurred two events of sacred import to four young people, but of little interest to the rest of the world.

The first was a wedding in the village church where the sweet voice of Alice Page had oft been heard, and where now as a bride she walked timidly to the altar.

Her pupils, aided by their parents, had turned the church into a bower of green, brightened by every colored flower that grew in field or garden. Even the old mill-pond contributed its share, and the altar was white with lilies. Almost every resident of the town was present, and the aged miller sat in one corner and watched with wistful eyes. The Nason family, with Aunt Susan and Albert, shared the front pew, and the little girl who once upon a time had said, "Pleath may I kith you, teacher," was accorded

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the proud privilege of strewing roses and violets along the aisle in front of the bride.

When the parting came, Aunt Susan made a brave effort to bear up until the train carried the wedding-party away, and the little miss who scattered flowers was inconsolable after Alice kissed her good-by. The old miller returned to his toil with a heavy heart, for he had known Alice since, as a child, he held her up that she might see the wheel go around and laugh and crow at its splashing. Many times each summer she had come there to gather lilies, and now she had gone, perhaps never to return. One by one the summer days would come and go, the mill-stone rumble, the big wheel splash, the old boat float idly beneath its willow, and the water-lilies bloom and fade; for sweet Alice would come no more to pluck them.

Two weeks later occurred the other event, when the "Gypsy" steamed into the Cape harbor and a select party became the guests of honor at Uncle Terry's home. Long tables decked with flowers and loaded with the best that Aunt Lissy could prepare stood under the trees in front; the little porch was a bower of ferns and clusters of red bunch-berries, and every man, woman, and child that dwelt on the island was there.

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Then after Albert and Telly had halted in the fern-covered porch to utter the simple but sacred words that bound them for life, the gladsome party gathered and made merry at the tables.

The sun was low in the west ere Telly kissed the tear-wet faces of Uncle Terry and Aunt Lissy and the "Gypsy" sailed away. Far to seaward the purple line of coming night was slowly creeping in, and side by side on the little knoll where stood a low white headstone, those two sat and watched her pass out of their lives. When only the wide ocean was visible and the line of shadow had crept up to the wave-washed rocks beneath them, Uncle Terry arose.

"We'd best go in, Lissy," he said.

And looking into his saddened face she saw that she must lead him, for he was blinded with tears.

THE END.

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